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ABE/LINK MALAWI TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT (MTPDS)

MALAWI EARLY GRADE MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT (EGMA):

National Baseline Report 2010

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Acronyms

DTED	Department of Teacher Education and Development
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
H	Hundreds
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MTPDS	Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support
T	Tens
U	Units
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

1. Executive Summary

Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) is a 3-year initiative that aims to improve teacher skills and, through that, the performance of learners in schools. One of MTPDS's responsibilities is to design and implement an assessment of the learners in Malawi. Between September and November 2010, MTPDS administered an assessment to measure student skills in early grade mathematics. Assessments were carried out in 50 schools across six divisions. A total of 999 standard 2 and standard 4 learners were assessed.

RTI's Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) instrument was adapted to the Malawian context for use under MTPDS. This instrument is designed to provide information on the level of competency in foundational numeracy skill areas. All the competencies measured are shown through research to be highly predictive of later mathematical proficiency and are susceptible to improvement through effective teaching (for more information, see the "EGMA Conceptual Framework" at www.eddataglobal.org). The instrument is administered orally, making it possible to assess children on what they know before they can correctly respond to questions on traditional paper-and-pencil tests. The core components of EGMA include oral counting, one-to-one correspondence (rational counting), number identification, number (quantity) discrimination, missing number (pattern completion), word problems, and basic operations (addition and subtraction).

Overall, the results show the students are performing at levels well below the levels that the Malawian curriculum expects of them. Across the subtests, analysis indicates a large proportion of students appear to be able to answer only the most elementary and procedural of items. The tests did not suggest significant differences in performance across districts or gender (although the Northern district does appear to perform consistently lower than the others).

The picture that the results paint is one of standard 4 students performing better than standard 2 students on all of the subtests and on most items within the subtests. The standard 4 students appear to know more of the answers than the standard 2 students do, yet not doing so with much understanding. Regardless, many students continue to struggle, even in standard 4. It appears any teacher development activities that seek to address the gaps identified by this study would need to pay special attention to the development of understanding (conceptual understanding), reasoning (adaptive reasoning), and application (strategic competence).

2. Introduction

As part of the MTPDS, it is important to understand how Malawian children are developing early standard numeracy skills. In November 2010, MTPDS conducted a nationally representative baseline of early standard numeracy skills using Malawian- EGMA instrument in 50 schools across 6 divisions. The results of the national baseline follow in this report with the purpose of informing USAID, MoEST and other relevant stakeholders of the current status of early grade numeracy development in Malawi. Additionally, this report was

undertaken to provide policy relevant and actionable information regarding the relative effectiveness of various instructional approaches and to identify particular areas of need for further attention and investment by MoEST and the donor community. The hope is that this will allow MoEST, donors and Malawian stakeholders to consider options for next steps for improving early grade numeracy, and importantly ensuring ownership and sustainability of reforms for the country.

Since Chichewa is the language of instruction in Malawi from standard 1 to standard 4, EGMA was conducted in Chichewa (see further discussion on the issues of language in sections 3.2 and 3.4). Instrument adaptation was done in collaboration with MoEST officials and representatives from the Department of Teacher Education and Development (DTED), Domasi College of Education, Teacher Training Colleges, Centre for Education, Research and Training, and Centre for Language Studies. All of the people involved in the adaptation process are specialists in numeracy / mathematics and evaluation in the country. EGMA was administered by a group of enumerators who were trained on data collection and assessment procedures, supervised by MTPDS project staff.

The assessment itself has several components (subtests), which have been tested in a variety of other low-income countries. The subtests are described in detail in section 3 of this report. The assessment was pretested at Chimutu School in Lilongwe, Malawi in October 2010 and piloted at Magwero, Mkukula, Lumbadzi and Chinkhuti schools in Lilongwe in early November 2010.

The initial portion of the report explains the design of the various subtests of the assessment and points out how they are related to important characteristics of early mathematics. The test adaptation process, pretesting, and pilot testing stages are then described, followed by a description of the sampling and testing procedures. Afterward, the analysis of results is presented in detail followed by general observations. The report concludes with conclusions and recommendations.

3. Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA)

This section briefly explains the background behind the adaptation of the EGMA tool for the Malawian context as well as behind the various subtests to make the analysis more meaningful for the reader.

EGMA consists of a number of subtests developed in response to the extensive research literature on early mathematics learning and evaluation. In addition to being aligned with the core competencies identified in a wide range of international curricula (from both developing and developed countries) the subtests represent a progression of skills that lead toward proficiency in mathematics. Furthermore, they systematically sample and test skills required during the early years and, in so doing, provide an indicator of needs for intervention. The EGMA assessment instruments used in the Malawi 2010 national baseline are included in annex A and B.

3.1 Subtest Description

The EGMA: Malawi tool included the following subtests:

1. *Oral counting*: The assessment of oral counting fluency targets children's ability to produce numbers fluently. In this subtest, children are asked to count by rote as far as they can. The score is based on the last correct number the child says previous to making an error or at the end of a minute. This is a timed subtest, since its purpose is to elicit a fluency measure.
2. *One-to-one correspondence (rational counting)*: One-to-one correspondence refers to counting objects. The assessment of rational counting targets children's ability to use two processes working together. The first process is recognizing the items they need to count. The second is to recognize, and mentally tag, those items that have already been counted. The EGMA subtest assesses for enumeration and then cardinality. This is a timed subtest, since its purpose is to elicit a fluency measure. For this subtest, the children were presented with a stimulus sheet (see annex A) with 120 circles, presented as 12 columns, with 10 circles in each column.
3. *Number identification*: The number identification subtest occurs toward the beginning of the EGMA to establish an understanding of children's knowledge and identification of written symbols. Here, students orally identify printed number symbols presented in a grid.
4. *Number (quantity) discrimination*: Number discrimination in EGMA measures children's ability to make judgments about differences by comparing quantities in object groups. In the case of EGMA, this is done by using numbers. For this subtest, children were given a pair of numbers and asked to declare the larger (higher quantity) number.
5. *Missing number (pattern completion)*: In this subtest, children are shown three or four numbers in a number sequence and a placeholder for a next or missing number. The child is asked to name the missing number.
6. *Word problems*: Word problems help to analyze children's informal concepts of addition and subtraction by observing the strategies children use to solve problems presented to them. In the context of EGMA, we do not so much observe the strategies used by the children as evaluate whether or not they are able to make a plan to solve a problem stated in words. The word problems cover the three key addition and subtraction problem types: joining/separating, combining, and comparing.
7. *Addition problems*: In this subtest, children are presented with two sets of addition items. The first set consists of five items that we would expect the child to be able to calculate mentally and answer fluently. All of the numbers used in this subtest are single-digit and do not involve the bridging through the number 10. The second set, also comprising five items, involves double-digit numbers as well as bridging through tens and, in one case, hundreds. The items are presented in written format. Although it is expected that stronger children in each standard should be able to perform the calculations mentally, they are allowed to use manipulatives (counters) and/or pencil and paper to perform the calculations.

8. *Subtraction problems:* In this subtest, children are presented with two sets of subtraction items. The first set consists of items that we would expect the child to be able to calculate mentally and answer fluently. The numbers used in this subtest are all single-digit and do not involve bridging through the number 10. The second set, also comprising five items, involves double-digit numbers as well as bridging through tens and, in one case, hundreds. The items are presented in written format. Although it is expected that stronger children in each standard should be able to perform the calculations mentally, they are allowed to use manipulatives (counters) and/or pencil and paper to perform the calculations.

3.2 Adaptation and Pretesting

Adaptation of the EGMA instrument took place in September 2010. The individuals charged with that adaptation were project staff and MoEST officials in the numeracy/mathematics and evaluation departments of DTED, Education Methods and Advisory Services, the Department of Basic Education, the Domasi College of Education, Teacher Training Colleges, and World Relief-CBE. They were led through the adaptation process by Aarnout Brombacher, an MTPDS consultant from South Africa. The assessment as a whole, as well as each of the individual subtests, was studied by participants to assure that the content would be familiar to the children being assessed; the content is aligned to the Malawian curriculum for standards 2 and 4; and the contexts used in word problems are accessible to children in Malawi. All of the questions were translated into Chichewa.

The questions were translated because according to the language policy of Malawi, the language of instruction from standards 1 to 4 is Chichewa. Classroom practices are such that where children struggle teachers may code switch between Chichewa and the more familiar local language to facilitate understanding. For this reason the test administration teams were constituted in such a way that the administrators (see section 3.4) were (as far as possible) able to clarify questions in local languages where necessary. Language does not play a role in the actual test items in EGMA since none of the subtests, with the exception of the word problems subtest, use language in anything but the instruction.

Once adaptation was complete the instruments were pretested the same week as the adaptation process and then piloted at the end of October 2010. The pretest was conducted in one school on the periphery of Lilongwe, selected by the local project workers and ministry officials on the basis that it was as representative of rural schools as possible under the circumstances. The sample was randomly chosen and included 19 children in standard 2, 22 children in standard 3, and 18 children in standard 4. The pretest was administered by the team of Malawians who participated in the adaptation process. The pretest results were analyzed in terms of the items on which the children scored well and poorly as well as in light of the test administrator's experiences of the children's responses. The results of the pretest were not evaluated more rigorously because the test was to be piloted more vigorously a few weeks later. The instrument was adapted in a series of small ways as a result of the pretest.

3.3 Piloting

The adapted EGMA instrument was piloted at the end of October 2010. Piloting of EGMA was carried out in schools in periurban and urban areas of Lilongwe. Four schools were chosen of which two were believed by ministry inspectors to be high-performing and two to be low-performing.¹ A total of 250 assessments were collected for children in standard 2 (124 responses) and standard 4 (126 responses) in these schools.

The results of the pilot study were evaluated using a Rasch analysis. This produces a person/item plot that provides insight into both the distribution of the participants and the items across the difficulty continuum. The Rasch analysis highlighted any ceiling effects and/or floor effects.² It also highlighted particular items that were potentially measuring the same thing, and therefore were redundant, or that were not performing well. Based on the interpretation of the analysis the items on the assessment were refined and finalized.



3.4 Sampling and Data Collection

The actual study was conducted during the first 2 weeks of November 2010.

In order to have a complete picture of children's early mathematics levels, the Malawi EGMA sample included children in standards 2 and 4. At this stage of the year, the children would have been at school for about 2 months of the school year. This sample thus gives us an idea of what children are capable of after 1 year and 1 term and 3 years and 1 term of learning, respectively. According to the Ministry of Education policy for standards 1 to 4, the language of instruction is Chichewa; thus, this was the language of the assessment. That said, as with classroom practice the test administrators were equipped to code-switch into the local languages to assist children in understanding the questions as and where necessary. Again, as mentioned, language does not play a significant role in the actual test items for all but one of the EGMA subtests.

¹ Choice of schools with high- or low-performing learners helps ensure the full range of student ability is captured for the grades assessed. Having a good range of student ability increases the chances that the pilot analysis will reveal level of appropriateness and validity.

² A ceiling effect occurs when test items are not challenging enough for a group of individuals. Because the test has a limited number of difficult items, the higher-performing individuals will have an improved chance to score the highest possible score, which is a problem for two reasons: (1) we do not learn what the limit of the higher-performing individuals is, and (2) if we are using the test to measure impact, then the test will be unable to show improvement even if the higher-performing individuals have improved. As the opposite of the ceiling effect, a floor effect occurs when test items are not easy enough for a group of individuals. Because the test has a limited number of easy items, the lower-performing individuals will be unable to score on the test. In this case, we do not learn what the low-performing individuals are capable of learning.

To provide a nationally representative sample of standard 2 and standard 4 learners about 1,000 (999) students were assessed from the 50 schools. Schools were selected at random from a list of all schools in the country provided by the MoEST's 2009 Education Management Information System (EMIS) database. The sample was random but chosen to reflect regional differences and school sizes. To assure those learners' schools were evenly spread out across the country the sample list was stratified by division and district. The sampling process used was systematic random sampling, proportional to population. Proportional-to-population sampling assures the sample reflects the way the population of learners is apportioned to schools. Within the school, the assessment was given to a random sample of 20 learners that included approximately 10 girls (5 each from standards 2 and 4) and 10 boys (5 each from standards 2 and 4), the resulting learner distribution between standards and genders was approximately even.

As this was a nationally representative sample, table 1 shows the sample spread across divisions. The sample was drawn based on how students are allocated to schools. Differences can be seen in the number of students assessed in the Central Western (28 learners) division compared with the other divisions (139–160 learners)—this division has more students in schools than the others.

Table 1. EGMA Sample, by Division and Gender

	Standard 2		Standard 4		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Central East	34	36	36	33	139
Central West	74	66	70	70	280
Northern	35	35	36	35	141
Shire Highlands	37	33	35	32	137
South East	40	40	40	40	160
South West	36	34	35	34	139
Total	256	244	252	244	996

Teams of enumerators were led by supervisors selected from the Teacher Training Colleges, Centre for Language Studies, and Centre for Education, Research and Training, and monitored by officials from MoEST, the Malawi Nations Examinations Board, the Department for Education Methods and Advisory Services, and the Malawi Institute of Education. Testing was completed during a one-day visit to each school. At each school, learners completed two assessments (reading and math). The content of EGMA and the language of administration were in Chichewa; however, language speakers of other major language groups were sent to regions where they could more easily communicate with children if there were communication barriers. Students were chosen randomly from class registers provided by the teacher or school director and were called to the assessment area by the supervisor.

3.5 Weighting of the Data

In this study, for cost and efficiency reasons, the sample was not a simple random sample of the population of students in each group of interest. In order to enable the making of inferences about the performance of the entire population (and not just those sampled), the results were weighted. The study results, including frequencies and percentages, should therefore be interpreted as representative of the students in Malawi.

4. Analysis and Results

In this section, we present the findings of our analysis of the data.

4.1 Overall Test Results

The EGMA instrument used in this study consisted of a number of subtests. The first two subtests, oral counting and one-to-one correspondence (rational counting), do not produce a correct/incorrect response but rather a measure of the extent to which a child can count in each of these ways. Although these subtests are important and the findings discussed later in the report, performance on these subtests cannot be included in the calculation of an overall result.

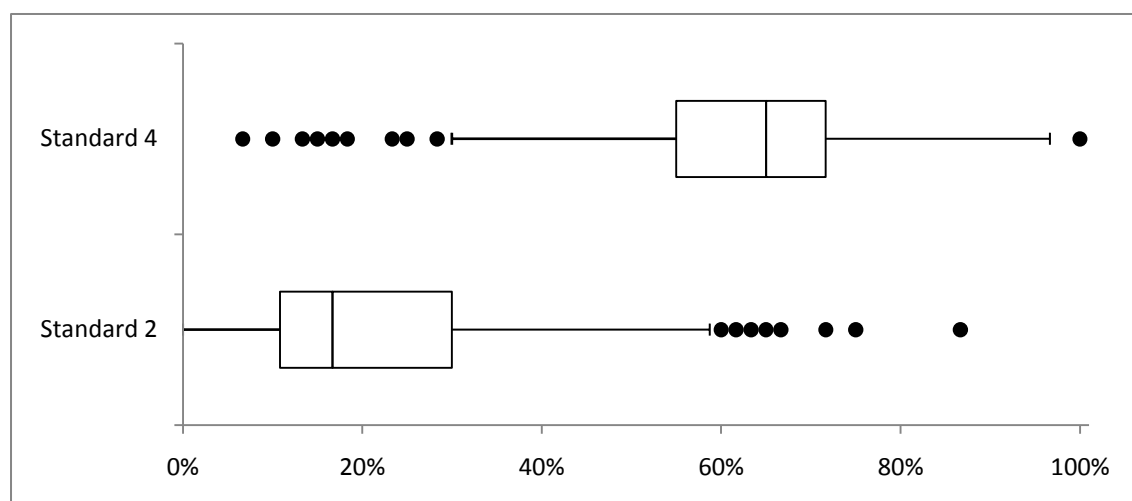
The overall result for each child is based on the performance by children on subtests 3 to 8 with each subtest being equally weighted; henceforth, this will be referred to as the *overall test result*.

The overall test results for standards 2 and 4 are presented in table 2 and summarized in figure 1.

Table 2. Overall Test Result, by Standard

	Standard 2	Standard 4
Minimum	0%	6.67%
Mean (weighted)³	21.8% \pm 1.44%	61.8% \pm 1.09%
Maximum	85.53%	100%
Standard deviation	15.52%	15.01%

Figure 1. Overall Test Result, by Standard



Both the data in table 1 and the graph in figure 2 shows quite clearly that there is a difference in the performance of the standard 2 and the standard 4 pupils. In general, the top 25% of the standard 2 students performed as well as the bottom 25% of the standard 4 students. This difference could suggest that, in general, the children in Malawi are benefiting from attending school. It should be noted that, as with any population, there also are a number of outliers; thus, the weakest of the standard 4 students are not that much better than the weakest of the standard 2 students, and the strongest standard 2 students are not that much worse than the strongest standard 4 students.

It remains to consider whether or not the performance by the two standards is standard-appropriate in terms of the curricular expectations. We also need to consider whether or not the difference in performance between standard 2 and standard 4, although marked, is in fact what we would expect for an additional 2 years of schooling. Both of these matters will be examined later in this report.

³ The weighted mean \pm the standard error is provided.

More than 75% of the standard 2 pupils are performing below 30% on a test of basic/foundational mathematics skills must already be considered a source of some concern.

4.1.1 Overall Test Results by Region and Gender

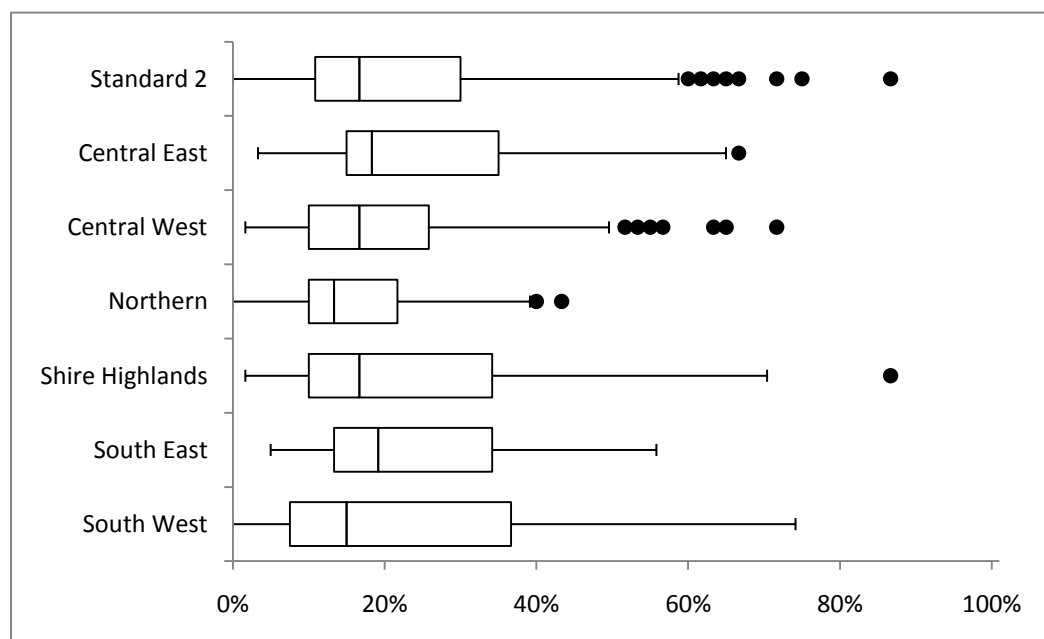
Before continuing with more detailed analysis it is worth exploring if there are significant differences in performance by region and/or by gender.

The overall test results for regions and gender by standard are presented in tables 3 to 6 and summarized in figures 2 to 5.

Table 3. Overall Test Result for Standard 2, by Region

	Standard 2	Central East	Central West	Northern	Shire Highlands	South East	South West
Minimum	0%	3.33%	1.67%	0.00%	1.67%	5.00%	0.00%
Mean	21.8%	25.6%	21.0%	15.8%	22.1%	25.0%	20.9%
Maximum	85.53%	66.67%	70.83%	42.50%	85.83%	55.83%	74.17%
Standard deviation	15.52%	16.22%	14.88%	10.,81%	17.23%	15.20%	15.03%

Figure 2. Overall Test Result for Standard 2, by Region

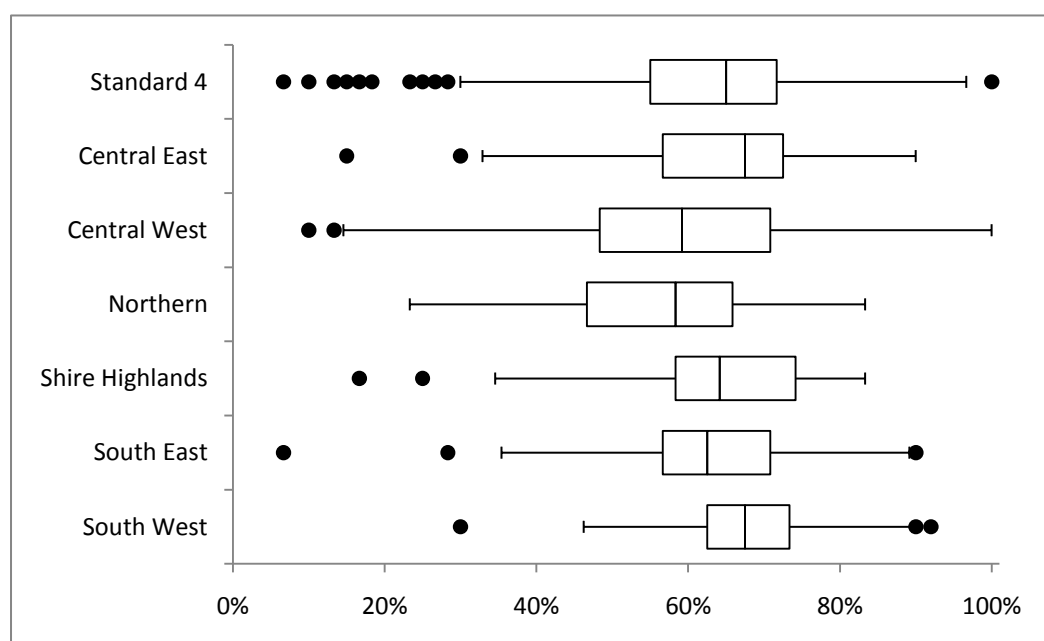


There is clearly some variation in the performance by region, with the Northern Region appearing to be, generally, the weakest region in standard 2 and the Central East and Shire Highlands Regions appearing to be the stronger regions. However, there is no one region that is significantly different from the other regions and/or from the standard as a whole.

Table 4. Overall Test Result for Standard 4, by Region

	Standard 4	Central East	Central West	Northern	Shire Highlands	South East	South West
Minimum	6.67%	15.00%	10.00%	23.33%	16.67%	6.67%	30.00%
Mean	61.8%	64.5%	58.2%	56.5%	63.9%	62.7%	66.3%
Maximum	100%	90.00%	100%	83.33%	83.33%	89.17%	91.67%
Standard deviation	15.01%	14.11%	16.74%	16.74%	14.14%	13.22%	10.89%

Figure 3. Overall Test Result for Standard 4, by Region

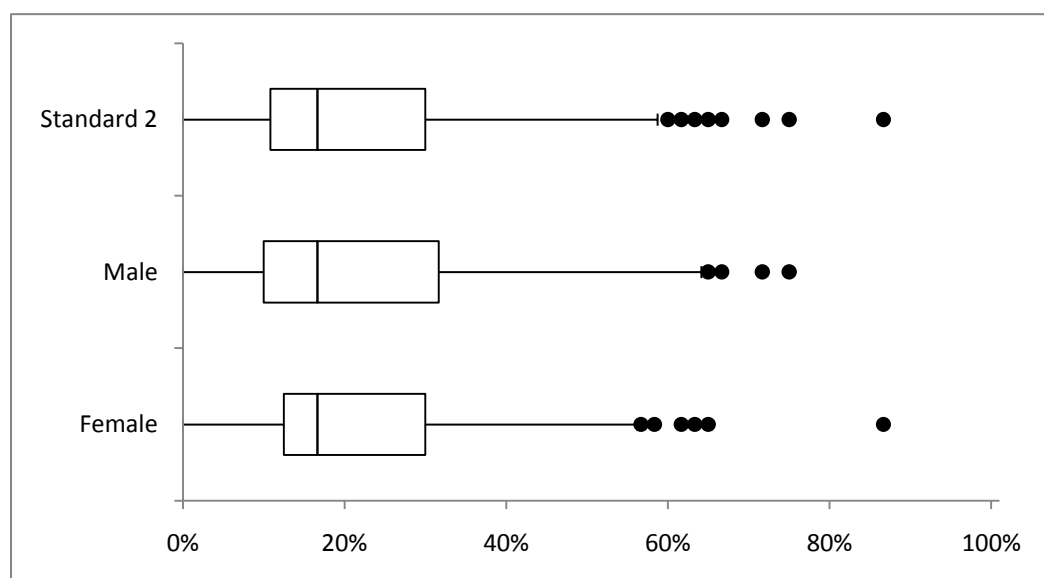


There is some variation in the performance by region, with the Northern Region appearing to be the generally weaker region in standard 4 as well. The Central East and South West Regions appear to be the stronger regions in standard 4. Otherwise, however, there is no one region that is significantly different from the other regions and/or from the standard as a whole.

Table 5. Overall Test Result for Standard 2, by Gender

	Standard 2	Male	Female
Minimum	0%	0.00%	0.00%
Mean	21.8%	21.4%	22.3%
Maximum	85.53%	74.17%	85.83%
Standard deviation	15.52%	15.90%	15.10%

Figure 4. Overall Test Result for Standard 2, by Gender

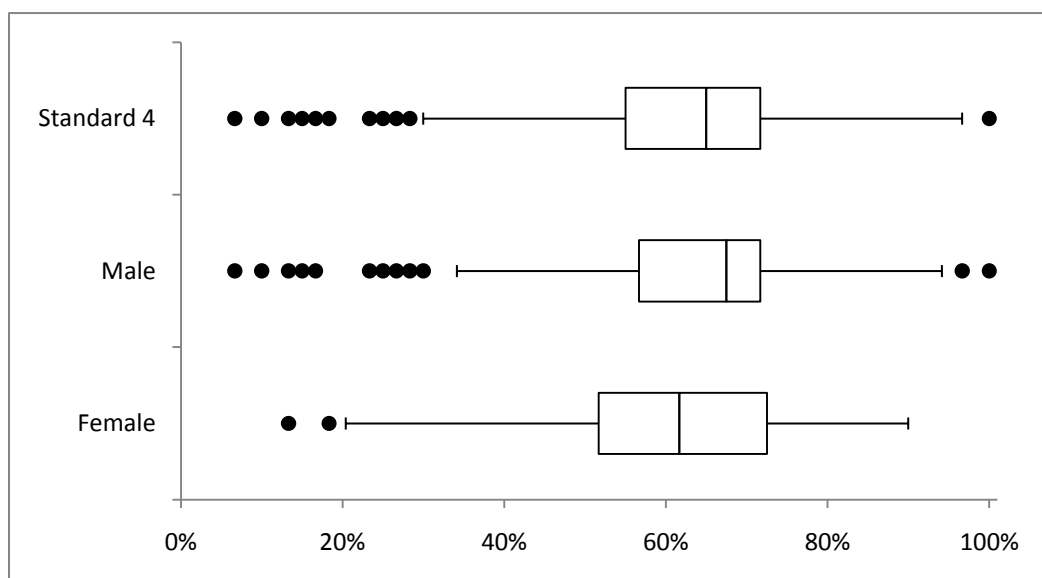


For standard 2 students, while there is a slight variation in the overall test performance by gender, neither gender was significantly different from the other and/or from the standard as a whole.

Table 6. Overall test result for Standard 4 by Gender

	Standard 4	Male	Female
Minimum	6.67%	6.67%	13.33%
Mean	61.8%	63.0%	60.7%
Maximum	100%	100%	90.00%
Standard deviation	15.01%	15.46%	14.47%

Figure 5. Overall Test Result for Standard 4, by Gender



As with the standard 2 students, there is a slight variation in the overall test performance by gender. Also, as with the standard 2 students, neither gender was significantly different from the other and/or from the standard as a whole.

In terms of overall performance, there does not appear to be a significant difference in performance by region and/or by standard. The only significant difference in overall performance is evident at the individual standard level.

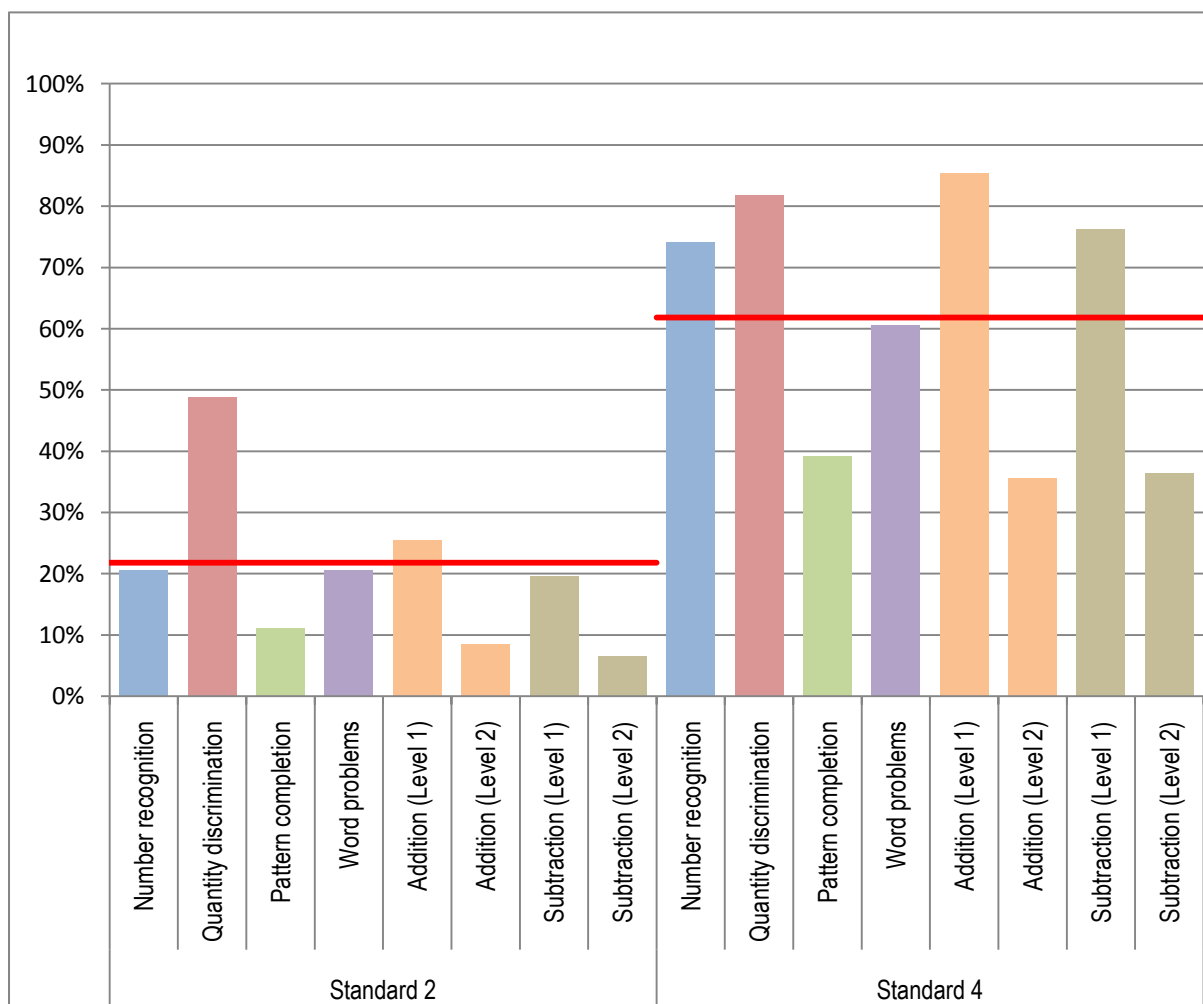
4.1.2 Overall Test Mean Compared With the Subtest Means by Standard, Region and Gender

In this section, we compare the overall test average with the average performance on each of the subtests. We first do so by standard (table 7 and figure 6), then by standard and region (tables 8 and 9 and figures 7 and 8), and finally by standard and gender (table 10 and figure 9).

Table 7. Subtest Average, by Standard

	Standard 2	Standard 4
Number recognition	20.5%	74.1%
Quantity discrimination	48.7%	81.8%
Pattern completion	11.1%	39.1%
Word problems	20.6%	60.5%
Addition (Level 1)	25.4%	85.4%
Addition (Level 2)	8.5%	35.6%
Subtraction (Level 1)	19.5%	76.2%
Subtraction (Level 2)	6.6%	36.3%
Total	21.8%	61.8%

Figure 6. Comparison of Subtest Average With Overall Test Average, by Standard⁴



What is evident from the data is that although there is a marked difference in the performance of the standard 2 students versus the standard 4 students, the trends across the subtests are remarkably similar. Both standards performed better on the same/similar subtests:

- Number recognition
- Quantity discrimination
- Word problems
- Addition (Level 1)
- Subtraction (Level 1)

Both standards performed less well on the same/similar subtests:

- Pattern recognition
- Addition (Level 2)
- Subtraction (Level 2)

⁴ The horizontal red lines represent the overall test means for each grade.

Table 8. Subtest Average for Standards 2 and 4, by Gender

	Standard 2	Standard 2 Male	Standard 2 Female	Standard 4	Standard 4 Male	Standard 4 Female
Number recognition	20.5%	19.4%	21.7%	74.1%	75.7%	72.5%
Quantity discrimination	48.7%	45.5%	52.3%	81.8%	82.7%	80.9%
Pattern completion	11.1%	11.2%	11.0%	39.1%	39.5%	38.8%
Word problems	20.6%	20.5%	20.8%	60.5%	61.8%	59.0%
Addition (Level 1)	25.4%	27.6%	23.2%	85.4%	86.4%	84.4%
Addition (Level 2)	8.5%	8.1%	8.9%	35.6%	37.0%	34.1%
Subtraction (Level 1)	19.5%	21.2%	17.9%	76.2%	76.2%	76.2%
Subtraction (Level 2)	6.6%	6.6%	6.6%	36.3%	38.6%	34.0%
Total	21.8%	21.4%	22.3%	61.8%	63.0%	60.7%

In the case of gender differences we were asked to investigate if there is an increasing disparity by gender from standard 2 to standard 4 since the table may suggest the possibility given that the absolute differences in the male and female averages appear to increase. Firstly it should be noted that while the difference in male and female averages is in absolute terms greater, it is in relative terms actually smaller. That noted the administration of a t-test indicates quite clearly that there is no evidence of a statistically significant difference in the performance of the males and females at either standard level and hence of disparity (increasing or otherwise). The t-score for standard 2: $t = 1.1264$ and t-score for standard 4: $t = 1.7866$ the t-score in both cases become statistically significant at the ± 1.960 level.

Table 9. Subtest Average for Standard 2, by Region⁵

	Standard 2	Central East	Central West	Northern	Shire Highlands	South East	South West
Number recognition	20.5%	25.1%	18.9%	14.6%	21.4%	23.8%	19.8%
Quantity discrimination	48.7%	50.8%	49.9%	45.6%	51.3%	51.7%	42.7%
Pattern completion	11.1%	14.0%	10.7%	3.6%	8.9%	14.7%	12.9%
Word problems	20.6%	26.5%	22.3%	13.9%	16.6%	24.1%	16.9%
Addition (Level 1)	25.4%	34.9%	23.0%	14.3%	26.2%	30.2%	24.0%
Addition (Level 2)	8.5%	10.2%	7.2%	5.7%	7.9%	12.6%	7.8%
Subtraction (Level 1)	19.5%	25.4%	15.9%	11.9%	21.4%	22.2%	21.9%
Subtraction (Level 2)	6.6%	6.1%	6.1%	2.2%	8.0%	8.3%	8.5%
Total	21.8%	25.6%	21.0%	15.8%	22.1%	25.0%	20.9%

⁵ In as much as language may have played a role, it is advisable to be cautious about over interpreting the consistently poorer performance by the Northern Region.

Table 10. Subtest Average for Standard 4, by Region

	Standard 4	Central East	Central West	Northern	Shire Highlands	South East	South West
Number recognition	74.1%	77.2%	67.7%	70.8%	81.7%	77.4%	76.2%
Quantity discrimination	81.8%	82.6%	79.8%	75.4%	85.6%	83.3%	84.1%
Pattern completion	39.1%	46.1%	33.0%	23,7%	47,8%	39,9%	45.0%
Word problems	60.5%	64.1%	57.7%	58.3%	57.0%	59.5%	66.2%
Addition (Level 1)	85.4%	88.0%	80.3%	82.4%	86.8%	88.0%	89.8%
Addition (Level 2)	35.6%	35.9%	33.8%	35.8%	30.7%	37.8%	39.4%
Subtraction (Level 1)	76.2%	78.1%	72.1%	68.9%	83.2%	71.1%	85.1%
Subtraction (Level 2)	36.3%	33.6%	36.7%	33.8%	32.9%	35.5%	42.5%
Total	61.8%	64.5%	58.2%	56.5%	63.9%	62.7%	66.3%

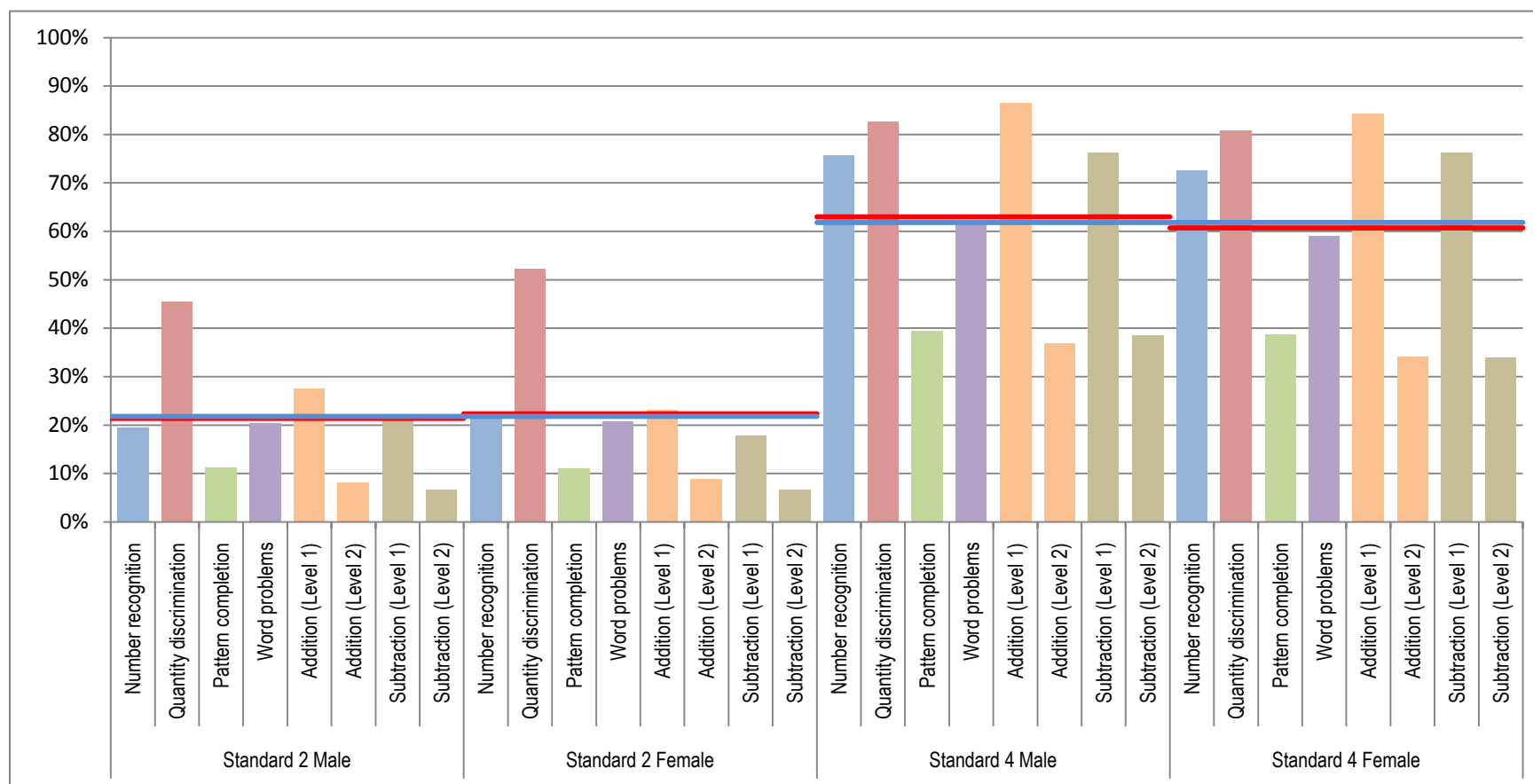
What is evident from the data is that although there is a difference in the performance of the standard 2 students versus the standard 4 students, the trends across the subtests are remarkably similar. Both standards performed better on the same/similar subtests:

- Number recognition
- Quantity discrimination
- Word problems
- Addition (Level 1)
- Subtraction (Level 1)

Both standards performed less well on the same/similar subtests:

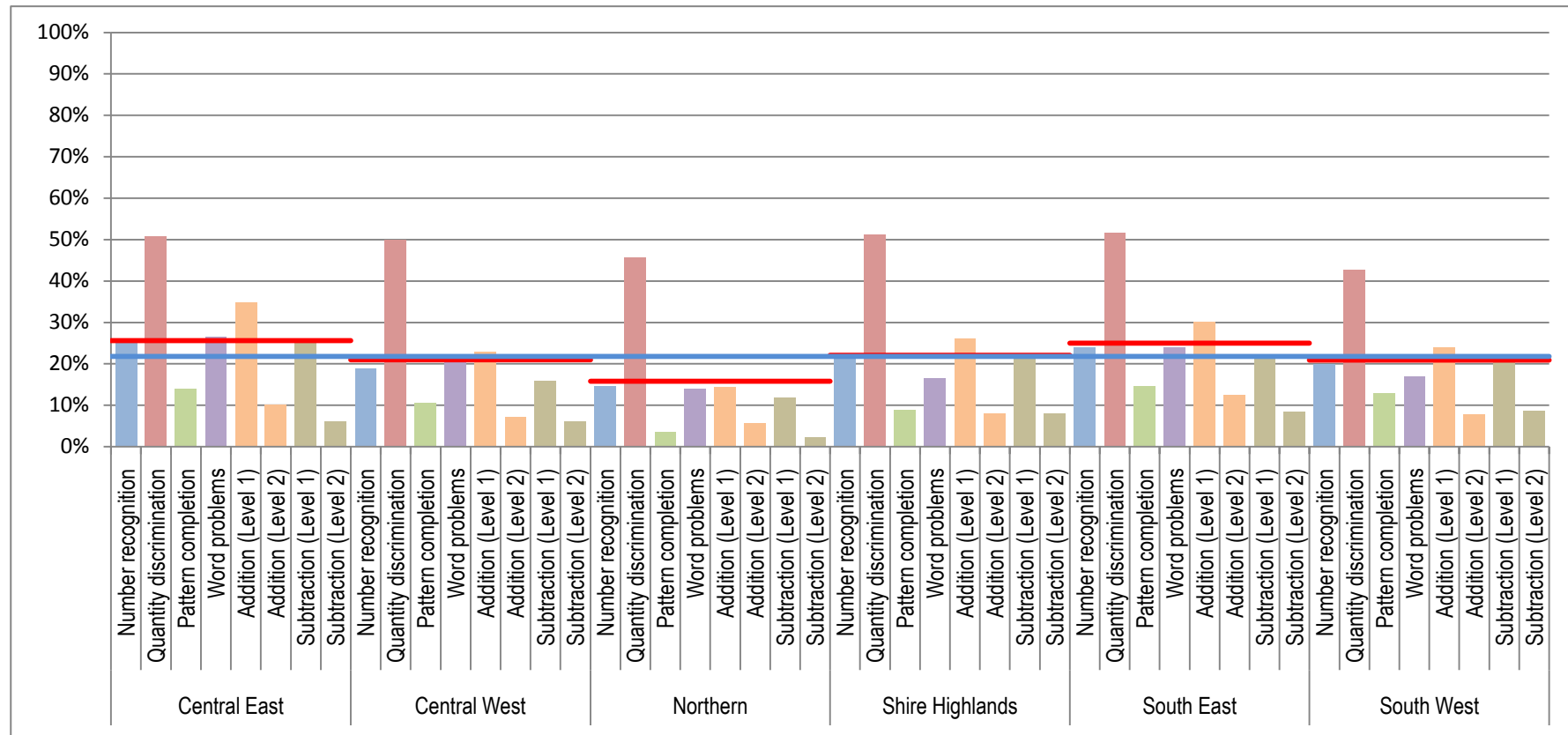
- Pattern recognition
- Addition (Level 2)
- Subtraction (Level 2)

Figure 7. Comparison of Subtest Average with Overall Average, by Standard and Gender⁶



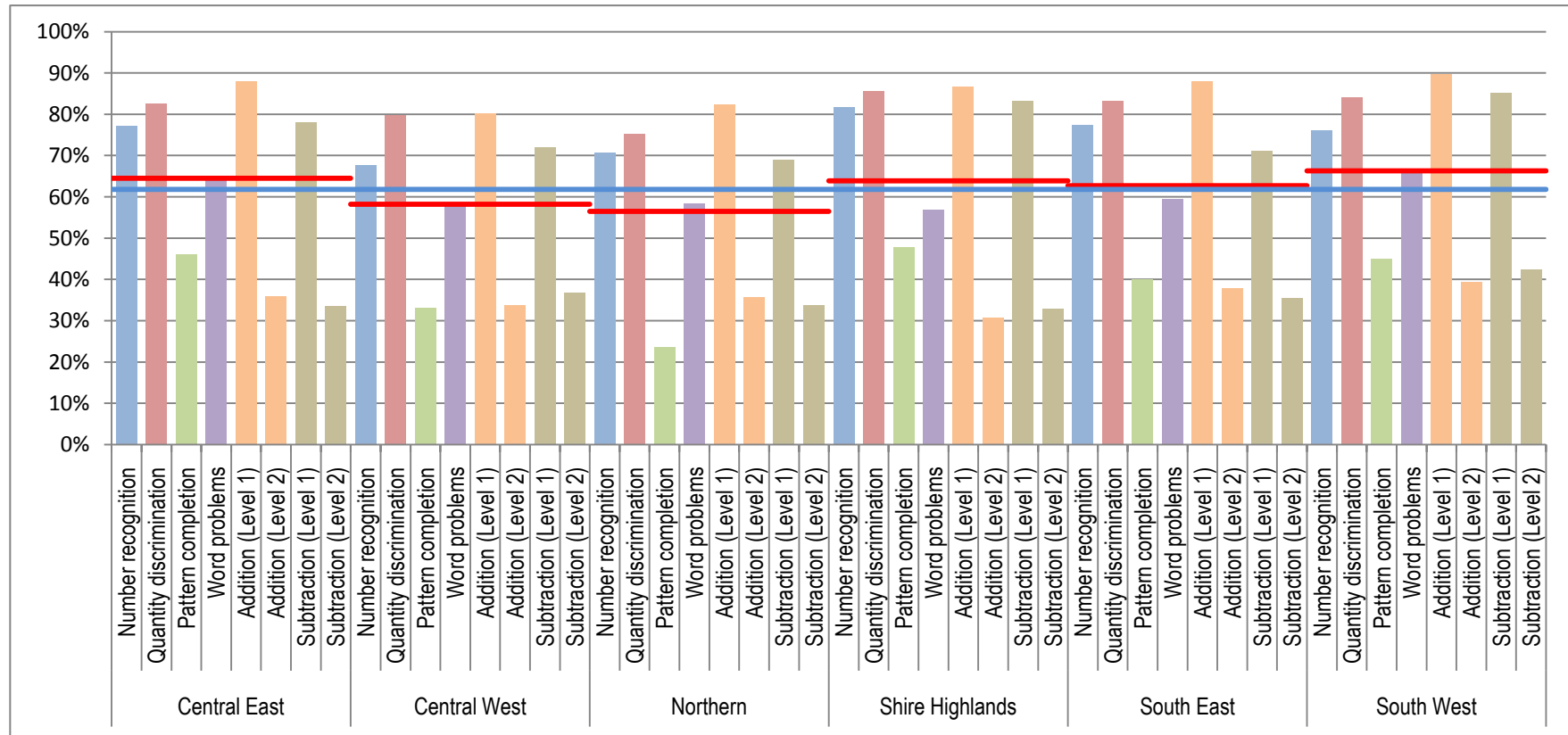
⁶ The horizontal red line represents the overall test means for each gender. The horizontal blue lines represent the overall test averages for each grade.

Figure 8. Comparison of Subtest Average with Overall Average for Standard 2, by Region⁷



⁷ The horizontal red lines represent the overall test means by region. The blue horizontal line represents the overall test mean for Grade 2

Figure 9. Comparison of Subtest Average With Overall Average for Standard 4, by Region⁸



⁸ The horizontal red lines represent the overall test means by region. The blue horizontal line represents the overall test mean for Grade 4.

The data summarised in the tables and represented by the graphs underscore the observations made based on the overall test data, namely that:

- apart from some variation across the regions and the genders, there was no significant difference in the performance of the genders or regions at either standard level; and the northern region, which performed most poorly across the standards on overall test score, also performed most poorly on all of the subtests at the standard 2 level and on most subtests at the standard 4 level. In terms of the trends observed across the subtests at the standard level, we again observe that within acceptable variation the performance on the following subtests was better for both regions and genders:
- Number recognition
- Quantity discrimination
- Word problems
- Addition (Level 1)
- Subtraction (Level 1)

For the regional and gender analyses performance was poorer on the same/similar subtests:⁹

- Pattern recognition
- Addition (Level 2)
- Subtraction (Level 2)

Std 2	Std 2 Male	Std 2 Female	(male - female)/average	Std 4	Std 4 Male	Std 4 Female	(male - female)/average
20,50%	19,40%	21,70%	-11,22%	74,10%	75,70%	72,50%	4,32%
48,70%	45,50%	52,30%	-13,96%	81,80%	82,70%	80,90%	2,20%
11,10%	11,20%	11,00%	1,80%	39,10%	39,50%	38,80%	1,79%
20,60%	20,50%	20,80%	-1,46%	60,50%	61,80%	59,00%	4,63%
25,40%	27,60%	23,20%	17,32%	85,40%	86,40%	84,40%	2,34%
8,50%	8,10%	8,90%	-9,41%	35,60%	37,00%	34,10%	8,15%
19,50%	21,20%	17,90%	16,92%	76,20%	76,20%	76,20%	0,00%
6,60%	6,60%	6,60%	0,00%	36,30%	38,60%	34,00%	12,67%
21,80%	21,40%	22,30%	-4,13%	61,80%	63,00%	60,70%	3,72%

⁹ When calculating the difference between male and females in terms of raw difference, the disparity appears to be getting greater. However, if the differences are expressed as a percentage of the average for the standard as a whole, then it gets smaller. The difference in Standard 2 fluctuates (sometimes the males are ahead and sometimes the females are ahead), in Standard 4 the boys appear to be ahead in all cases. Determining how statistically significant would require further analysis beyond the scope of this report. MTPDS does not believe that it indicates an increasing, or at least alarming, disparity.

In summary, there is no strong evidence to suggest that the regions (with the possible exception of the Northern Region) and/or the genders performed markedly differently from the overall performance and/or trend across the subtests at each standard level.

In the case of the Northern Region, we should be sensitive to the possibility that the consistently poorer performance may, in part, be attributed to language issues. The instructions of the test items were presented in Chichewa and mediated in the local languages as it was found to be necessary by the administrators. And, in as much as the EGMA items are largely language independent (with the possible exception of the word problems subtest), the possibility still remains that language did play a role. The analysis of the data is unable to disaggregate or distinguish between mathematical performance alone and the possible impact of language.

It should also be noted that the performance is, in general, low when compared to both the expectation of the Malawi curriculum for mathematics and the international literature on expectations of performance by children in these standards. The point being that the focus of attention in responding to the data should rather be on the more general results than on the analysis of possible gender and/or regional differences since these are, if they exist, less concerning at this stage than the rather worrying overall picture.

4.2 Analysis at Subtest Level

We turn our attention now to the analysis of the performance at the subtest level. We will consider each subtest one by one, comparing performance at the subtest level with the overall average and comparing the performance on each of the items in the subtest with the subtest average. For each subtest, we will make comments on the implications for an intervention program. These recommendations are informed throughout by both international good practice in mathematics teaching and the awareness of the Malawian context and Malawian realities as communicated by the members of the MTPDS team.

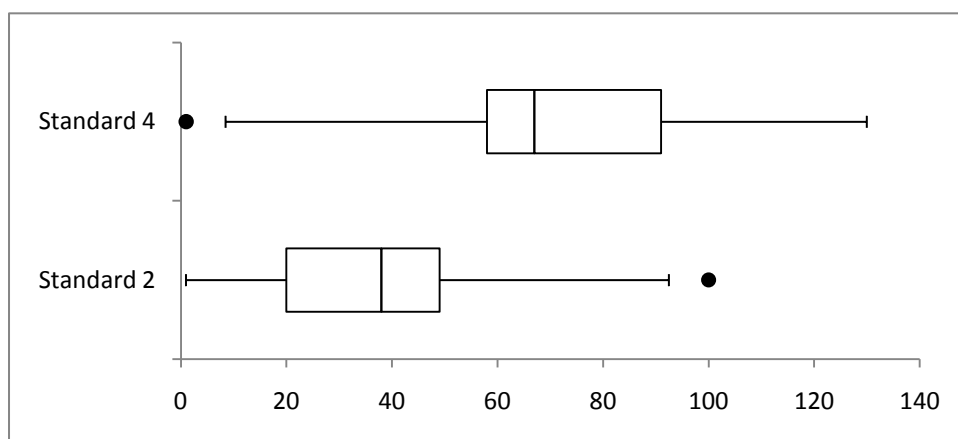
4.2.1 Oral Counting

The results of the oral counting subtest are presented in table 11 and summarized in figure 10.

Table 11. Results of the Oral Counting Subtest, Standards 2 and 4

	Standard 2	Standard 4
Minimum	1	1
Mean	37.10	70.95
Maximum	100	130

Figure 10. Results of the Oral Counting Subtest, Standards 2 and 4



Counting is the most basic of all mathematics skills, with rote counting (this subtest) being even more basic than rational counting (the next subtest), in large part because rote counting is not much more than reciting a rhyme. That said, rote counting is very important if children are to make progress, as they need the vocabulary that rote counting helps to develop.

That none of the standard 2 students and fewer than 25% of the standard 4 students could count beyond 100 is of concern. In the case of the standard 2 students, only 25% of the learners managed to count beyond 49. In the case of the standard 4 students, 75% of the learners were able to count beyond 58 but only 25% of the learners could count beyond 91. If children do not have the vocabulary to count beyond 100, then they will struggle to count rationally beyond 100, to develop a sense (numerosity) of larger numbers, and/or to solve problems involving numbers greater than 100.

In terms of generally accepted good practice recommendations for intervention include:

- Both standard 2 and standard 4 children need to have opportunities to count and to count as far as they possibly can. Standard 2 children should by the end of the school year be able to count well into the hundreds. Standard 4 children should be able to count into the thousands and to do so in a variety of step sizes.
- It is important that teacher training draws the teacher's attention to the fact that whole-class counting benefits very few children, as many, if not most, can hide within the group. Opportunities, especially in the early years, need to be found for children to count individually.
- Malawian context or reality in large part contributes to the problems of standard 2 and 4 classes with 100+ children. If children cannot count individually they will not improve their sense of number, etc. The challenge for the MoEST over the longer term is to (1) see how these recommendations can best be implemented in the Malawian context and reality within Malawi classrooms; and (2) as a systemic issue, see if and how the actuality of overcrowding in Malawi classrooms be modified to create a more conducive environment.

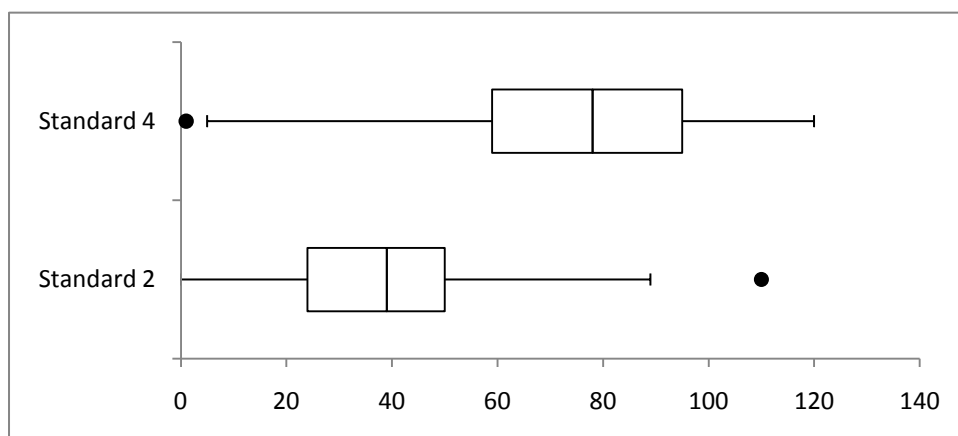
4.2.2 One-to-One Correspondence

The results of the one-to-one correspondence (rational counting) oral counting subtest are presented in table 12 and summarized in figure 11.

Table 12. Results of the One-to-One Correspondence Subtest, by Standard

	Standard 2	Standard 4
Minimum	0	1
Mean	38.08	75.15
Maximum	110	120

Figure 11. Results of the One-to-One Correspondence Subtest, by Standard



Second to rote counting, rational counting is one of the most basic of mathematical skills. In order to solve problems, children need not only to be able to count objects but also to be able to count out a set of objects. Through rational counting, children develop their sense of numbers and number size.

Since there were 120 circles on the stimulus sheet, it was not possible for any learner to have counted beyond 120. While there were a few learners in standard 4 who reached 120, the vast majority did not.

The mean for the standard 2 students is 38, and for the standard 4 students, 75. These means (averages) for the standards appears to be low when compared with the kinds of targets that we see in both the Malawian and international curricula for children in these standards (typically up to and beyond 100 by standard 2 and 1,000 by standard 4). In this sense, while the standard 4 students did perform better than the standard 2 students, their performance really only can be considered at a standard 2 level.

Recommendations for intervention:

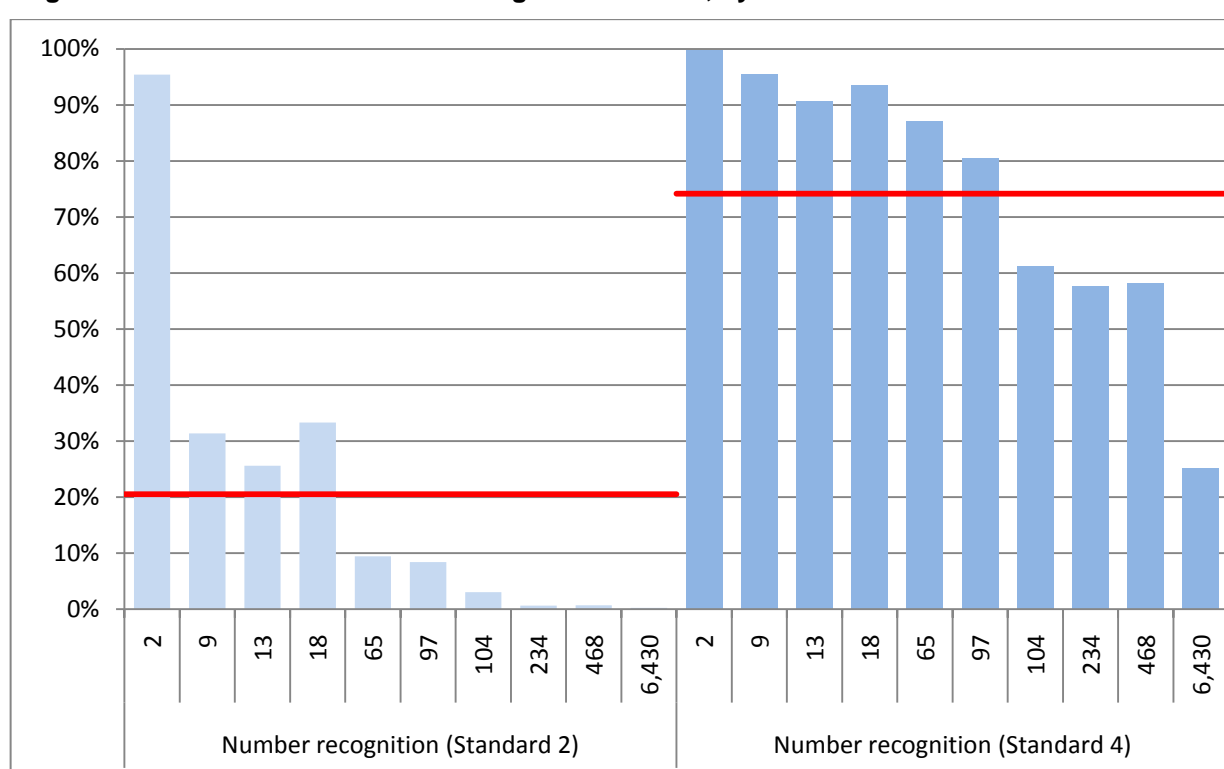
- Both standard 2 and standard 4 children need to have frequent (daily) opportunities to count concrete objects (counters) frequently. Standard 2 learners should by the end of the school year be able to count well in to the hundreds. Standard 4 children should be able to count into the thousands and to do so in a variety of step sizes.

- It is important that teacher training draws teacher's attention to the fact that there is a difference between rote counting (reciting a rhyme) and rational counting – the counting of objects. There is a place for both. Teachers need to be aware that rational counting is an individual activity and children do not benefit from doing so as part of a group.
- There are a number of different age-appropriate rational counting activities, and teachers should be trained in using these different methods and in knowing when to use the different ways.

4.2.3 Number Recognition

The results of the number recognition subtest are presented in figure 12.

Figure 12. Results of the Number Recognition Subtest, by Standard¹⁰



Across the standards, regions and genders, the learners performed at or below the average level of the overall test average on this subtest.

When we examine the performance by test item for the subtest, we find that:

- Children in standard 2 underperformed the subtest average on all numbers above 20, and very few, if any, can recognize numbers above 100.
- Children in standard 4 underperformed the subtest average on all numbers greater than 100, showing a distinct drop in performance on the numbers greater than 100 and showing an even greater dropoff for numbers greater than 1,000.

¹⁰ The horizontal red lines represent the subtest averages for each grade.

Being able to recognise and write numbers is central to being able to communicate (read and write in mathematics), to solving problems in mathematics, and to performing almost all mathematics procedures. That said, children need to learn to recognise and write numbers in much the same way they need to learn to read and write text. In this sense, children need opportunities to practice regular reading and writing of numbers if they are to improve and work at standard-appropriate levels on these skills.

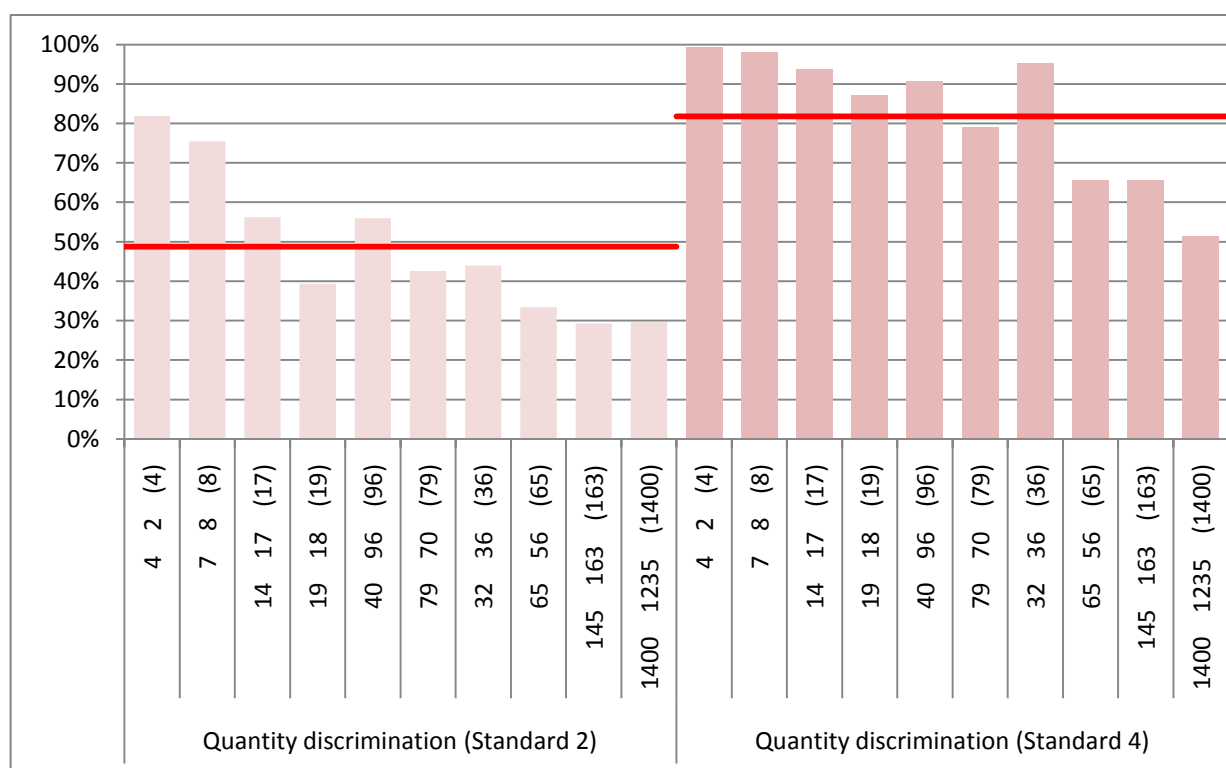
Recommendations for intervention by standard:

- Standard 2 children need significant exposure to numbers greater than 20.
- Standard 4 children need significant exposure to numbers greater than 100 and well into the thousands.
- Teacher training should help teachers realise that learning to recognize (read) and write numbers is much the same as learning to read and write text: it takes time and regular practice.

4.2.4 Quantity Discrimination

The results of the quantity discrimination subtest are presented in figure 13.

Figure 13. Results of the Number Recognition Subtest, by Standard¹¹



Across the standards, regions and genders, the learners performed well above the average level of the overall test on this subtest. In the case of the standard 2 students it could safely be argued that this subtest pulled the overall average up.

¹¹ The horizontal red lines represent the subtest averages for each grade.

When we examine the performance by item for the subtest we find that:

- Learners in standard 2 underperformed the subtest average on the item where the numbers are very similar (19; 10); on items that could be argued to be confusing to children at this age ([79; 70], [32; 36], and [65; 56]); and on items involving numbers with more than two digits. This underperformance seems age-appropriate.
- Learners in standard 4 underperformed the subtest average on a pair of numbers greater than 50 (65; 56) and on items involving numbers with more than two digits. This underperformance is no longer age-appropriate.
- In general, it would appear as if the learners struggle to discriminate between whole numbers whose leading digits are the same (i.e., they struggle to discriminate unless the numbers are very obviously different) and between whole numbers involving the same digits.

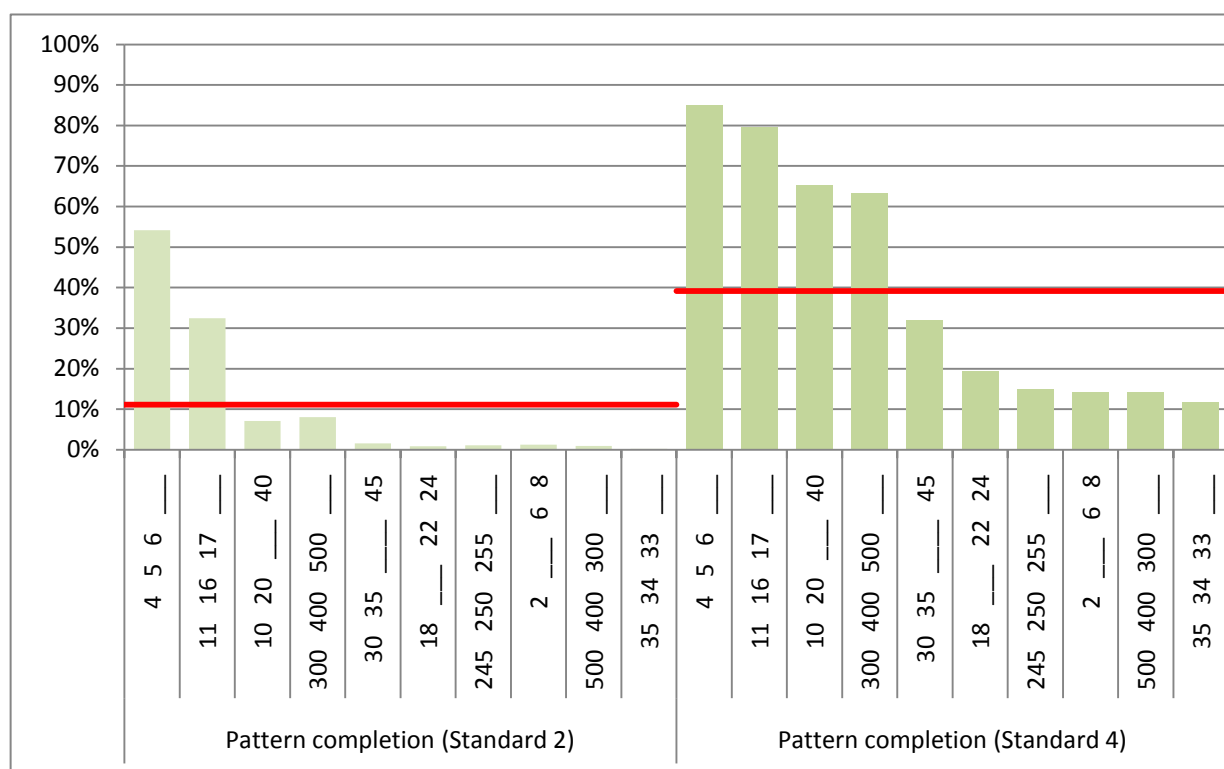
Recommendations for intervention by standard:

- More frequent rational counting with related written activities will contribute to an increased sense of number in general.
- A stronger sense of the meaning of numbers—that is, knowing that $65 = 60 + 5$, as an example— will also assist learners to discriminate more effectively between numbers.
- A word of caution must be raised at this point in time. Many programs (including the Malawian program – as evidenced in the mathematics textbooks used in Malawian schools) seek to develop a sense of number and place value through a rigid adherence to a Hundreds (H), Tens (T), and Units (U) approach. This approach involves both coaching children to express numbers in terms of the number of hundreds, tens, and units that it represents and aligning numbers in columns to add and subtract with them. As much as this approach will lead to children saying that 65 is equal to 6 tens and 5 units, the meaning of that expression is not at all clear to most children, and addition in columns (at too early a stage, in particular) does little to help children develop an understanding of what they are doing. Despite saying that 65 is equal to 6 tens and 5 units, few children regard that as having said that $65 = 60 + 5$. The Malawian textbooks used in the early years have many activities as well as drawings involving T and U. Although this makes perfectly good sense to the adults who create the metaphor, the same is not true for children: they do not attach the same meaning to this notation that adults can and do.

4.2.5 Missing Number (Pattern Completion)

The results of the missing number (pattern completion) subtest are presented in figure 14.

Figure 14. Results of the Missing Number (Pattern Completion) Subtest, by Standard¹²



Across the standards, regions and genders, the learners performed well below the average level of the overall test on this subtest. With the exception of the addition (Level 2) and subtraction (Level 2) subtests, learners performed most poorly on this subtest.

When we examine the performance by item for the subtest, we find that:

- Standard 2 children underperformed the subtest average on 8 of the 10 items. The two items on which they outperformed the average involved numbers smaller than 20 and a step size of 1. In terms of the items on which the learners underperformed the average, the patterns all involved step sizes greater than 1 and/or numbers greater than 20. It is clear that the standard 2 students have had very little exposure to patterns, in general, and to patterns involving a constant difference of greater than 1, in particular.
- Standard 4 children underperformed the subtest average on 6 of the 10 items. These items all involve step sizes greater than 1 and/or patterns that involved counting backwards.

Mathematics involves among other things the study of patterns. This includes recognizing, describing, extending, and eventually generalizing patterns. It is critical that learners are provided with opportunities to develop these skills.

¹² The horizontal red lines represent the subtest averages for each grade.

Recommendations for intervention by standard:

- Standard 2 children need substantial exposure to counting in steps other than 1.
- Standard 4 children need substantial exposure to counting in steps other than 1. Counting in steps is critical if children are to be able to decompose and recompose numbers—critical to working flexibly with numbers.
- In both standards, attention also needs to be paid to pattern recognition, and extension as well as increasing and decreasing sequences. Teacher training and development needs to pay attention to this matter.

4.2.6 Word Problems

The results of the word problems subtest are presented in figure 15.

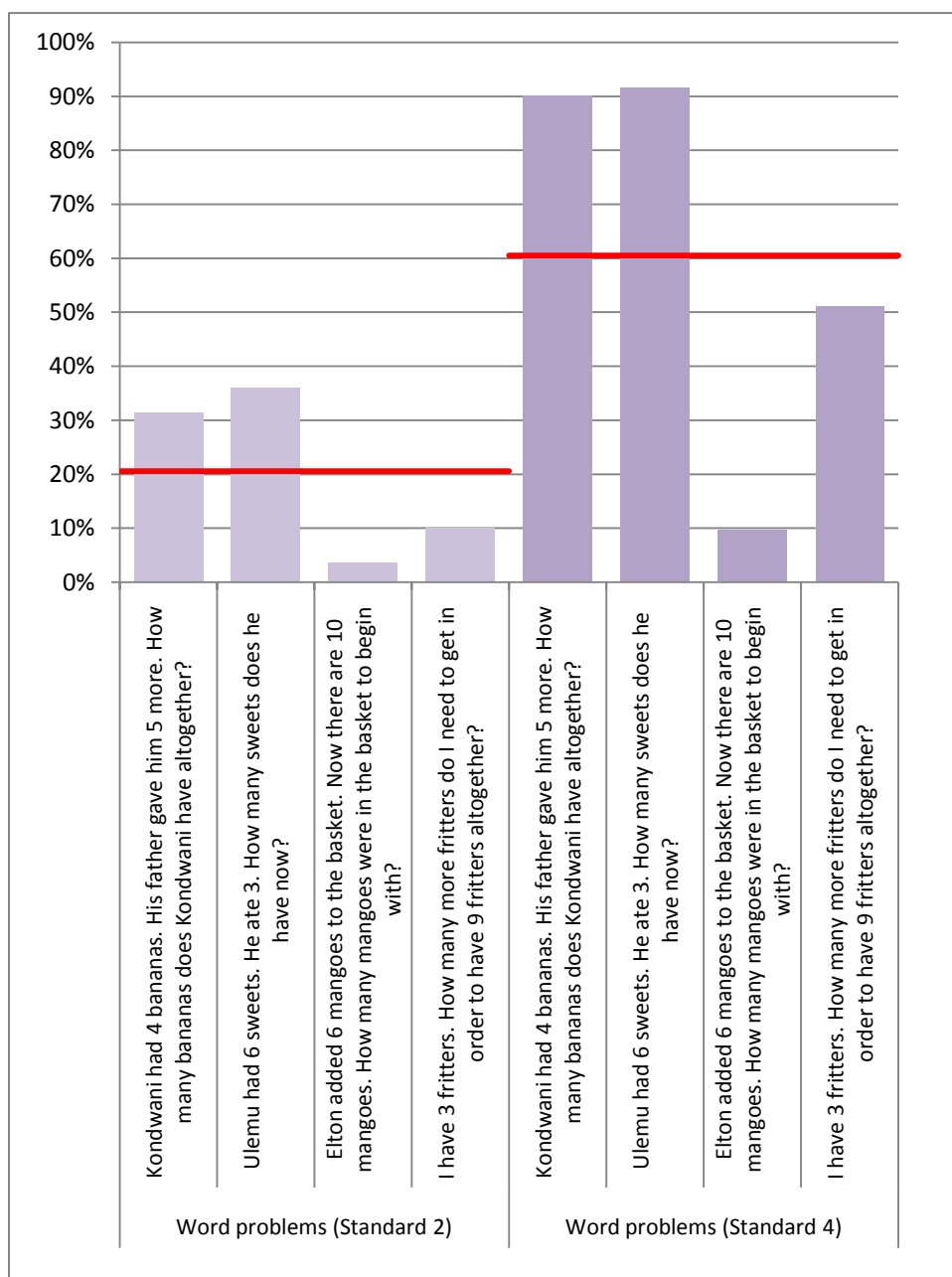
Learners were provided with counters (manipulatives) as well as paper and pencil, which they were allowed to use to solve these problems. It was made clear to the learners that they were allowed to use these tools but that they did not have to. The test administrators were asked to record whether or not the learners used their fingers, the counters, and/or the paper and pencil. The results of the test administrator observations with regard to the use of tools are summarised in table 13.

Table 13. Word Problems: Tools Used and Percentage of Learners Attempting Problem 4

	Word problem 4 respondents	Learners who used fingers	Learners who used counters	Learners who used pencil and paper
Standard 2				
Responded to question	51%			
Use of tools		24%	16%	2%
Standard 4				
Responded to question	95%			
Use of tools		28%	47%	5%

In administering the test, test administrators were instructed to skip the fourth word problem if a learner has either not answered or answered incorrectly all of the first three word problems. The rationale for this instruction is that the fourth item was harder than the first three, and if learners did not answered three consecutive items correctly then they were unlikely to answer any further questions correctly; it was deemed unnecessary to cause the learner anxiety by asking them yet another question on which they will almost certainly fail. The number of learners who responded to word problem 4 is recorded in table 12. This number implies the number of learners who got all of questions 1 to 3 incorrect—i.e., for standard 2, since 51% of learners attempted question 4, 49% of learners either did not attempt or got all of questions 1 to 3 wrong.

Figure 15. Results of the Word Problem Subtest, by Standard¹³



The reader studying the items (word problems) in figure 15 may be struck by the number values being used in these items: they appear small. Effectively, the underlying problems (number sentences) are:

- Problem 1: $4 + 5 = \square$
- Problem 2: $6 - 3 = \square$
- Problem 3: $\square + 6 = 10$
- Problem 4: $3 + \square = 9$

¹³ The horizontal red lines represent the subtest averages for each grade.

The number values are deliberately small in this subtest because we are not testing the learner's ability to solve the arithmetic as much as we are testing their ability to make sense of/interpret a problem statement.

Both the standard 2 students and the standard 4 students marginally underperformed the overall test average on the word problem subtest (20.6% versus 21.6% for standard 2 students and 60.5% versus 61.8% for standard 4 students).

When we examine the performance by item in each subtest, we find that:

- Standard 2 children underperformed the average for the subtest on two of the four items. In these items, the word problem is not presented in the more traditional format of $\checkmark + \checkmark = ?$ and/or $\checkmark - \checkmark = ?$. This is a matter that deserves attention. If children are presented only with items of the more traditional form, then they get into the habit of performing an operation on the two numbers in the problem without any analysis of the problem itself.
- Of particular concern with the standard 2 students is that nearly one half (49%) of the learners tested did not get a single one of the first three items correct.
- In terms of the tools used by the standard 2 students to solve the word problems, their apparent reluctance to use any of the tools available (including their fingers) may indicate, firstly, that these learners are not used to solving problems and, secondly, that they experience mathematics as the production of answers, often from memory.
- The standard 4 students underperformed the average for the subtest on the two of the four items not presented in one of the most traditional forms. Only 5% of these learners did not get any of the items correct.
- In terms of the tools used by the standard 4 students to solve the word problems, we notice an increase (over the standard 2 students) in the number using counters; this is encouraging and positive.
- The distinctly better performance on the items in this subtest by the standard 4 students suggests the possibility that more are able to make sense of or interpret a problem. Still, their underperformance on the less traditional problem structures hints very strongly at children *choosing* the numbers in the problems and performing a calculation with them rather than performing a calculation after considered interpretation of the situation. Thus, while there is an overall improvement in performance on the subtest from standard 2 to standard 4, one must be cautious in overinterpreting that as an indication of increased problem-solving skills. The profile across the items tells a different story.

Recommendations for intervention by standard:

- Problem solving is the fundamental purpose of mathematics. We study mathematics in order to solve problems. Learners' underperformance on this subtest tells us a lot about how they experience mathematics. Rather than experiencing mathematics as a *meaningful, sense-making, problem-solving activity* they experience it as *the memorization of facts, rules, formulas and procedures needed to determine the answers to questions*. Unfortunately, this experience of mathematics contributes to very limited and hence limiting understanding of the subject and, in turn, underperformance.

- Any intervention project needs to pay as much attention to what mathematics is taught as it does to how that mathematics is taught (see comments under section 5).

4.2.7 Addition and Subtraction

The results of the addition and subtraction subtests are presented in figure 16 for standard 2 and figure 17 for standard 4.

In order to enable the data to be interpreted more easily, the following description of the addition and subtraction subtests is provided – the analysis of the performance on these subtests follows after the presentation of the tables and figures. The addition and subtraction subtests each consisted of two sets of 5 questions: the so-called “Level 1” and “Level 2” questions. The Level 1 addition and subtraction questions involve numbers in a low number range, and it is expected that children should be able to perform these calculations mentally. Learners were not given access to counters and/or paper and pencils for the questions at this level. The test administrators were asked to record whether or not the learners used their fingers. The Level 2 addition and subtraction questions involve numbers in a higher number range, and it is expected that some/many of these children would have to use tools other than mental arithmetic to solve these. Learners were provided with counters (manipulatives) as well as paper and pencil, which they were allowed to use to solve these problems. It was made clear to the learners that they were allowed to use these tools but that they did not have to. The test administrators were asked to record whether or not the learners used their fingers, the counters, and/or the paper and pencil. The results of the test administrator observations with regard to the use of tools are summarised in table 13.

In administering the test, test administrators were instructed to stop administering the Level 1 questions of each of these subtests once a learner had made three consecutive errors. They were further instructed to stop administering the Level 2 questions if the learner tried to solve the first two questions through counting either with the counters and/or the drawing of stripes. The rationale for both instructions was that the items are arranged in order of increasing difficulty, and if learners have not answered three consecutive questions correctly and/or are using a primitive and/or inappropriate method (given the number size) then they are unlikely to answer any further questions correctly either; it was deemed unnecessary to cause them anxiety by asking them more questions on which they will almost certainly fail. The number of learners who responded to items 4 and 5 (at Level 1) and 3, 4, and 5 (at Level 2) is recorded in table 14. This number implies the number of learners who got all of the three or two preceding questions wrong—i.e., for standard 2, since 41% of learners attempted addition item number 5 (Level 1), the rest of the learners, 59%, either did not attempt or got all of questions 2 to 4 wrong.

Figure 16. Results of the Addition and Subtraction Subtests, Standard 2¹⁴

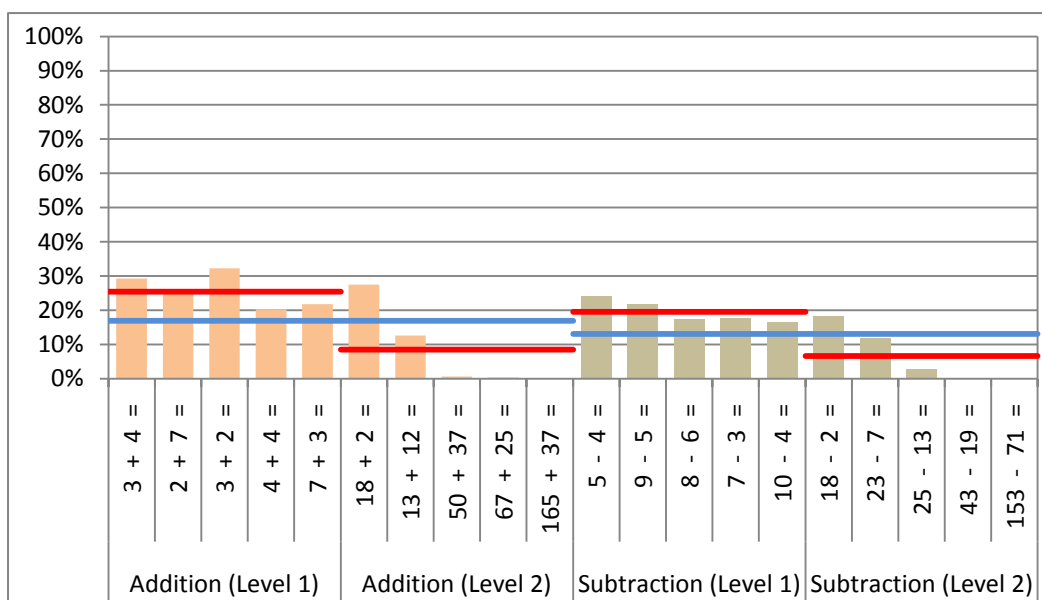
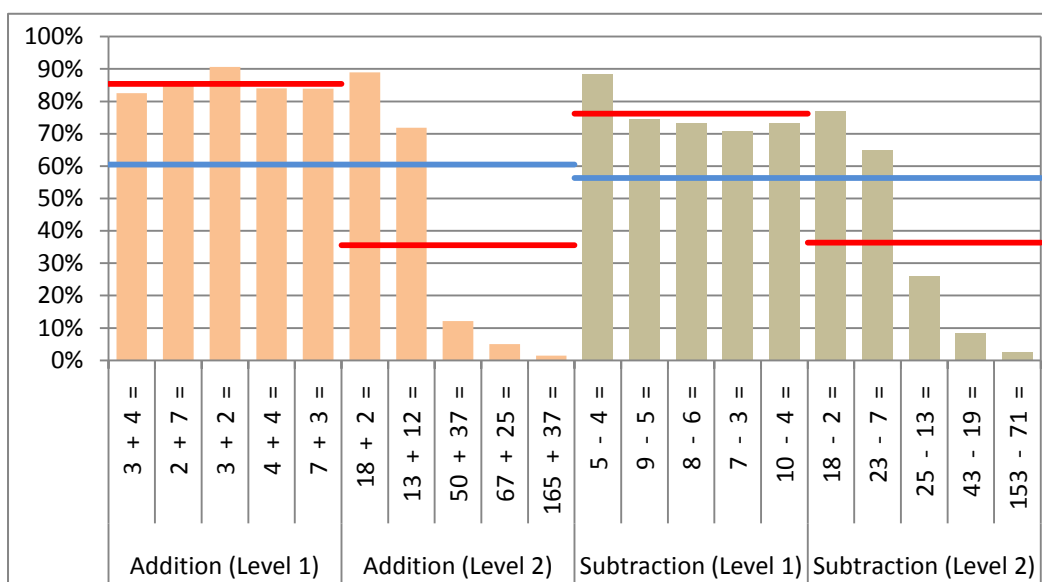


Figure 17. Results of the Addition and Subtraction Subtests, Standard 4¹⁵



The standard 2 students outperformed the overall test average on the addition (Level 1) items only (25.4% versus 21.8%); they slightly underperformed the overall test average on the subtraction (Level 1) items (19.5% versus 21.8%); and they significantly underperformed the overall test average on the addition (Level 2) and subtraction (Level 2) items (8.5% and 6.6% versus 21.8%, respectively).

¹⁴ The horizontal red lines represent the subtest averages for each level of each subtest; the horizontal blue lines represent the averages for the two subtests (Levels 1 and 2 combined).

¹⁵ The horizontal red lines represent the subtest averages for each level of each subtest; the horizontal blue lines represent the averages for the two subtests (Levels 1 and 2 combined).

The standard 4 students outperformed the overall test average on both the addition (Level 1) and subtraction (Level 1) items (85.4% and 76.2% versus 61.8%, respectively) and significantly underperformed the overall test average on the addition (Level 2) and subtraction (Level 2) items (35.6% and 36.3% versus 61.8%, respectively).

When we examine the performance by item in each subtest, we find that:

- Nearly 56% of standard 2 students are unable to answer even one single-digit addition sum with an answer less than 10 correctly. Nearly 65% of them are unable even one single-digit subtraction difference correctly. This is a source of some concern. Interestingly, only 26% to 28% of the standard 2 students used their fingers to solve these sums, yet all of them could have been solved on the fingers of two hands. The result suggests very strongly that a large percentage of standard 2 students may not even understand what is meant by the expression $3 + 4 = \square$ or $5 - 4 = \square$.
- Having noted the above, it is unsurprising that the standard 2 students virtually did not perform on the addition and subtraction (Level 2) items except for those involving values less than 30, did not perform bridging for addition, and only performed limited decomposition for subtraction ($23 - 7 = \square$).

Table 14. Addition and Subtraction Subtests: Tools Used and Percentage of Learners Attempting Items

	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Learners who used fingers	Learners who used counters	Learners who used pencil and paper
Standard 2 (addition)						
Responded to question (L1)		44%	41%			
Responded to question (L2)	81%	8%	7%			
Use of tools (L1)				26%		
Use of tools (L2)				26%	2%	21%
Standard 2 (subtraction)						
Responded to question (L1)		35%	32%			
Responded to question (L2)	81%	12%	7%			
Use of tools (L1)				28%		
Use of tools (L2)				12%	28%	1%
Standard 4 (addition)						
Responded to question (L1)		92%	92%			
Responded to question (L2)	57%	48%	36%			
Use of tools (L1)				49%		
Use of tools (L2)				69%	11%	78%
Standard 4 (subtraction)						
Responded to question (L1)		91%	87%			
Responded to question (L2)	99%	35%	29%			
Use of tools (L1)				54%		
Use of tools (L2)				24%	76%	10%

- Although the picture in standard 4 is significantly better, it is important to be mindful that the test items (with the possible exception of item 5 at Level 2 of each subtest) are all in line with the expectations of the standard 1 and 2 curriculum for Malawi.
- In terms of the tools used by the standard 4 students to solve the addition and subtraction questions, it is interesting to note that while the majority attempted to use paper and pencil (76%) in combination with fingers to perform the addition (Level 2) calculations, the majority resorted to using counters (76%) for the subtraction (Level 2) calculations. It would appear as if they regard subtraction quite differently from how they regard addition.

Recommendations for intervention by standard:

- The ability to perform basic calculations confidently and fluently is a foundational skill in mathematics. That, at most, a few of the standard 2 students can only perform the most basic of basic addition and subtraction calculations. The standard 4 students can only perform these calculations with confidence as long as the questions are at a standard 2 level in terms of curricular expectation. This suggests that:
 - in general, children in Malawi are not doing enough calculating with numbers, and

- the calculating that they do is more concerned with rote learning and/or memorization than with the development of meaning/understanding.
- As with the word problems, the results on the addition and subtraction subtests indicate clearly that any intervention project needs to pay as much attention to what mathematics is taught as it does to how that mathematics is taught (see comments under section 5).

4.3 General Observations

Throughout the analysis of the subtests and the items in those subtests, it has emerged quite clearly that the learners in each standard are only getting the most elementary of items correct. Typically, children perform better on items that are completely procedural in nature, and, in most cases, at a level some standards below the child's actual level. Notwithstanding the fact that the learners tested in this assessment are at the start of standard 2 and standard 4 years, in general, learners are not able to perform the subtests expected of them as determined by the curriculum for their respective standard levels.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The data strongly suggest that the children who participated in the pilot study are performing at levels well below the levels that the Malawi curriculum expects of them.

The analysis has shown that from subtest to subtest the children are only able to answer the most elementary and procedural of items with any sense of confidence.

In the case of the standard 2 students:

- They struggled to identify numbers greater than 20.
- They struggled to complete patterns that involve counting in anything but ones. That is, they do not seem to be able to count in 2s, 5s, or 10s and struggled to count backwards in any step size, including 1.
- With respect to word problems, only 30% were able to answer the questions with the basic structures $\square + \square = ?$ and $\square - \square = ?$ but struggled to make sense of the situations involving the structures $\square + ? = \square$ and $? + \square = \square$. In part, this suggests the children are not used to having to make sense of situation and also partly suggests they have a poor sense of what they need to do when faced with a contextual problem.
- In terms of basic addition and subtraction facts, they found the questions involving numbers and answers greater than 20 more difficult.

In the case of the standard 4 students:

- 75% of the learners were able to count beyond 58, but only 25% of the learners could count beyond 91.
- They underperformed the number identification subtest average on all numbers greater than 100.
- They struggled to complete number patterns involving step sizes greater than 1 and/or patterns that involved counting backwards
- With respect to word problems, they were able to answer the questions with the basic structures $\square + \square = ?$ and $\square - \square = ?$ but struggled to make sense of the situations involving the structures $\square + ? = \square$ and $? + \square = \square$. In part, this suggests the children are

not used to having to make sense of situation. It also suggests they have an impoverished sense of what they need to do when faced with a contextual problem.

- Although the standard 4 students performed significantly better on the addition and subtraction items than the standard 2 students did, it is important to be mindful that the test items (with the possible exception of item 5 at Level 2 of each subtest) are all in line with the expectations of the standard 1 and 2 curriculum for Malawi.

The picture that emerges is of children doing only the most basic aspect of the standard-appropriate mathematics well.

The teacher training response/solution lies not so much in “getting the basics right” and/or “getting the basics in place” but rather in how these “basics” are experienced.

That standard 4 children are more confident only on those aspects of the curriculum that we would expect standard 2 students to be confident with suggests the children are “getting the basics” but many years after desired.

The picture that the results paint is one of children eventually knowing what the answers are and yet not doing so with much understanding (in particular, see their responses to the word problems).

In addition to the recommendations already made in the analysis of each of the subtests above, it appears that any program that seeks to address the gaps identified by this study would need to pay special attention to understanding, reasoning and application.

Table 15: Recommendations for Consideration of Policy Makers

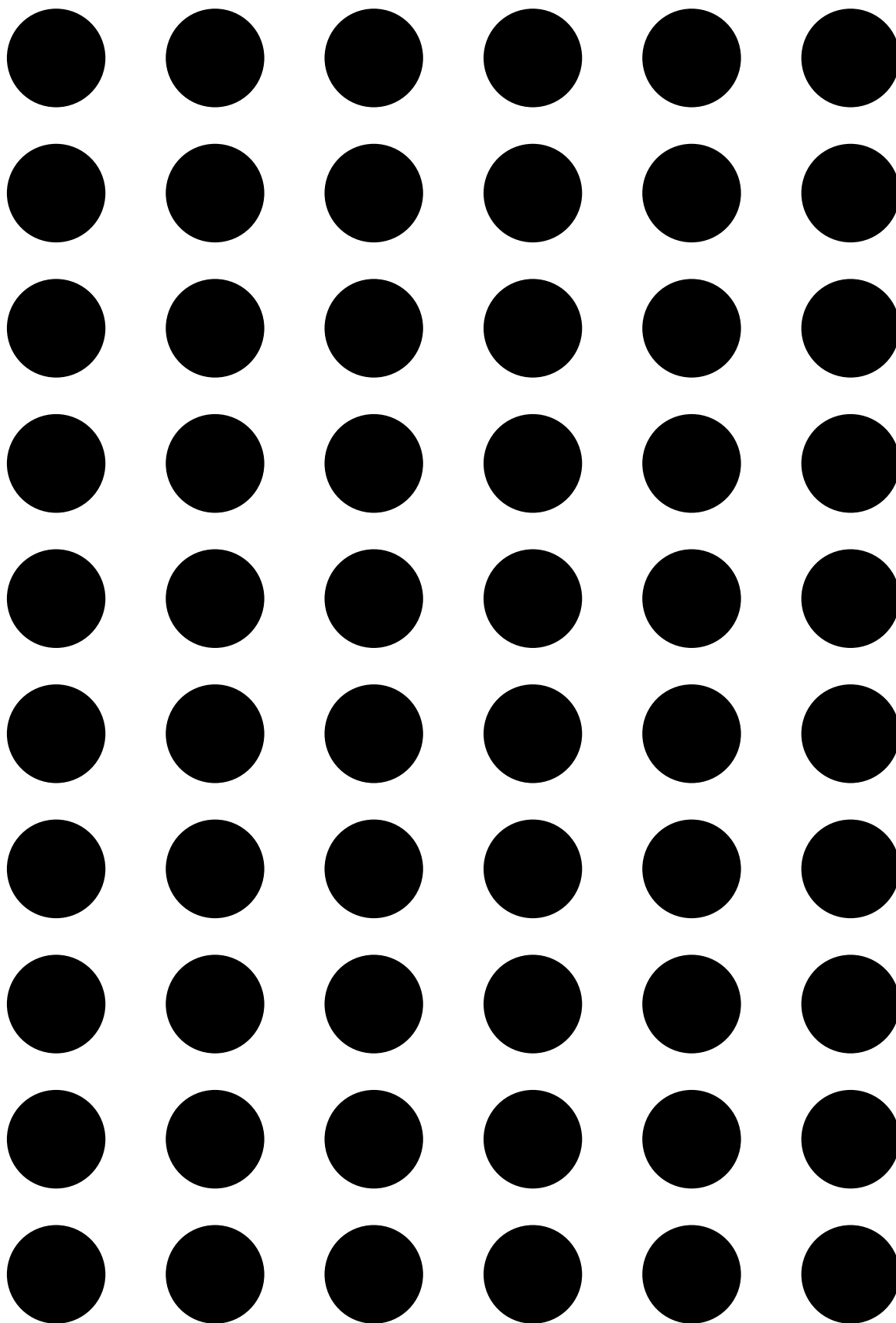
Review current policies affecting early grade numeracy – policies such as class size, length of school day, teacher preparation, language of instruction could be changed to improve student learning
Review current curriculum – based on results of EGMA a review of currently curriculum could be helpful to find gaps in what students need to know and what is in the curriculum, and clarify age-appropriate rational counting
Review of current materials – reviewing textbooks and other reading materials used in classrooms for appropriateness, materials should be based on a logical scope and sequence and should start simple and get more complicated, paying as much attention to what is taught as to how it is taught
Train Teachers – professional development is needed in specific instructional strategies and methods focused on mathematics (both pre and in-service training on numeracy instruction) focusing attention on how children are getting the basics, and develop conceptual understanding, adaptive reasoning, and strategic competence (e.g., frequent or daily opportunities to count concrete objects with counters)
Focused instruction on early numeracy skills – assuring that teachers focus attention to understanding, reasoning and application, offering opportunity for students to practice calculations in developing learning and understanding, and experience mathematics as a meaningful, sense-making, problem-solving activity rather than memorization of facts, rules, formulas and procedures
Train PEAS to be instructional coaches – Refocusing PEAs focus to be experts in early numeracy instruction and coaching. This could include modeling and providing constructive feedback to teachers during regular classroom visits
Research – design a study to test research based best practices of early numeracy instruction for Malawian context that would include design of numeracy intervention, teacher training, implementation in several hundred schools, and capacity building and policy dialogue for MoEST to be able to scale up

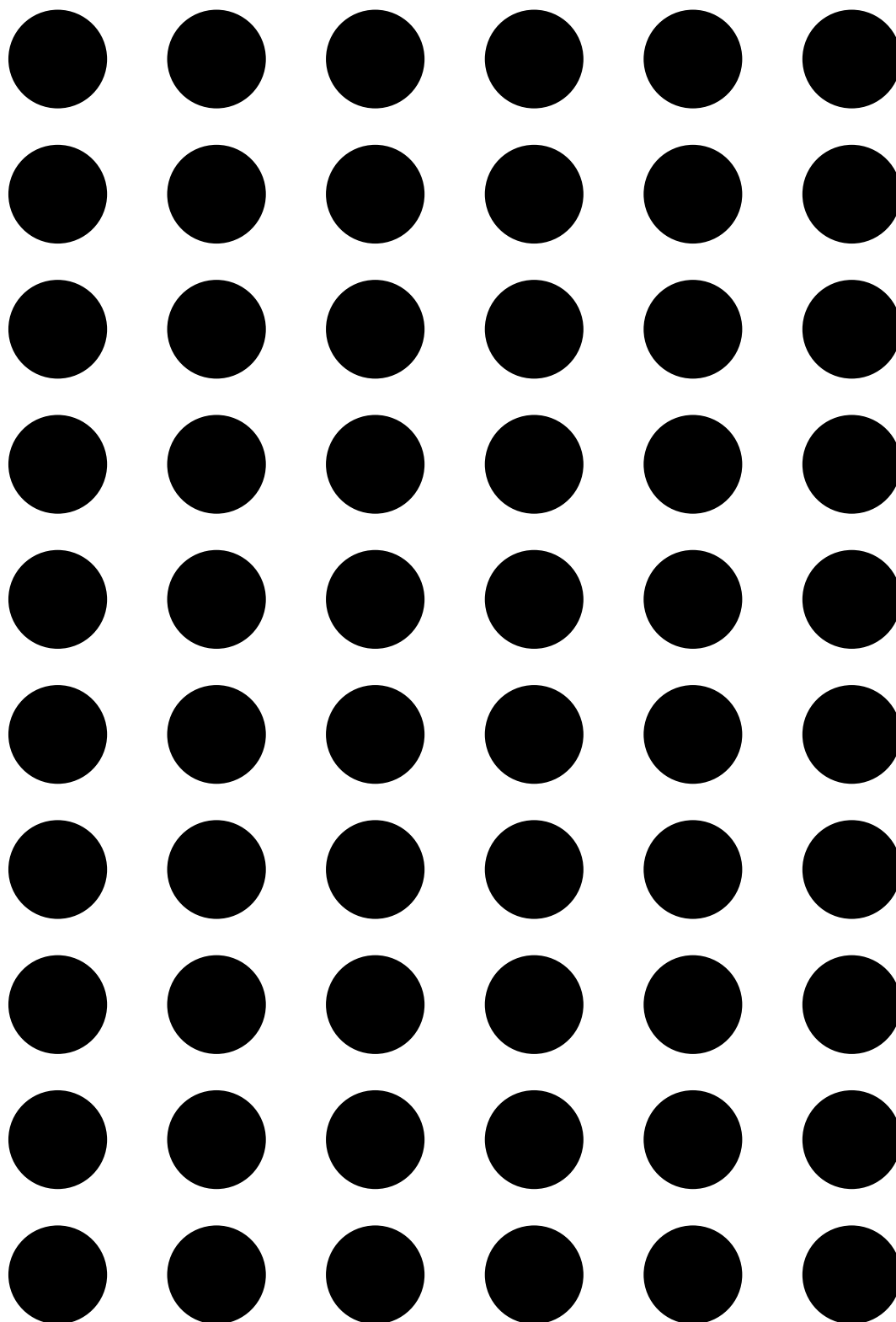
***Annex A: Malawi Early Grade Math
Assessment: Student Stimuli
Booklet, October 2010***

EGMA

Student stimulus sheets







2

9

13

18

65

97

104

234

468

6,430

4

2

7

8

14

17

19

18

40

96

79

70

32

36

65

56

145

163

1,400

1,235

4 5 6 —

15 16 17 —

10 20 — 40

300 400 500 —

30 35 — 45

18 — 22 24

245 250 255 —

2 — 6 8

500 400 300 —

35 34 33 —

$$3 + 4 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$2 + 7 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$3 + 2 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$4 + 5 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$7 + 3 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$18 + 2 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$13 + 12 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$50 + 37 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$67 + 25 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$165 + 37 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$5 - 4 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$9 - 5 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$8 - 6 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$7 - 3 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$10 - 4 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$18 - 2 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$23 - 7 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$25 - 13 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$43 - 19 = \underline{\quad}$$

$$153 - 71 = \underline{\quad}$$

***Annex B: Malawi Early Grade Math
Assessment: Student Response
Form, Administrator Instructions
and Protocol, October 2010***

General instructions

It is important to establish a playful and relaxed rapport with the children to be assessed, via some simple initial conversation about topics of interest to the child. The child should perceive the following assessment almost as a game to be enjoyed rather than as a severe situation.

Verbal Consent Read the text in the box clearly to the child:

- Dzina langa ndi _____. Ndimagwira ntchito ku unduna wa Zamaphuziro.
- Tikufufuza m'mene ana amaphunzirira masamu. Iwe uli m'gulu la ana amwai amene asakhidwa.
 - Tikufuna thandizo lako. Koma ngati suliwomasuka kutengapo mbali uli womasuka kutero.
 - Tisewera masewero okhudzana ndi manambala.
 - Ndigwiritsa ntchito wotchi iyi kuti tione nthawi imene ungatenge poyakha mafunso.
 - Awa simayeso a pasukulu pano.
 - Ndifunsanso mafunso okhudzana ndi banja lakwanu, chiyankhulo chomwe mumayakhula ndi zina zokhudza ndi banja lakwanu.
 - Sindilemba dzina lako choncho palibe amene adziwe zamayakho ako.
 - Tingayambe?


















Check box if verbal consent is obtained:

☐ YES

(If verbal consent is not obtained, thank the child and move on to the next child, using this same form)

A. Date of assessment :	
B. Assessor name/code :	
C. NAME and location of school :	
D. Unique School code :	
E. Unique student code :	

F. Student's grade level :	<input type="radio"/> 1 = Standard 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 = Standard 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 = Standard 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 = Standard 4
G. Student's month and year of birth :	Month : _____ Year : _____ Age: _____
H. Student's gender :	<input type="radio"/> girl <input type="radio"/> boy

Task 1: Oral Counting		60 sec limit																														
<p> Ndikufuna undiwerengere. Ndikuwuzwa nthawi yoyambira ndi yomalizira kuwerenga. Ndiwerengere kuyambira 1 mpakana pamene ungalekezerepo, yamba: 1 ...</p> <p> Umvetsere m'mene ndikufunira kuti uwerengere. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Monga m'mene ndawerengera, werenga kuyambira 1 mpakana pamene ungalekezerepo, yamba: 1 ...</p>		<p> • If child makes an error • If time reaches 60 sec.</p>																														
 Last number counted correctly:																																
Task 2: Rational Counting	 Sheet 1 (double)	60 sec limit																														
<p> Ukuwonawa ndi maseko. Ndikufuna kuti uziloza ndi kuwerenga masekowa. Uyambire seko iyi: 1 ...</p> <p> Wawerenga maseko angati?</p>		<p> • If child makes an error • If time reaches 60 sec.</p>																														
 Last circle counted correctly:																																
 Number of circles that the child says they counted:																																
Task 3: Number recognition	 Sheet 2 (2 pages)	60 sec limit																														
<p> Ukuwonawa ndi manambala. Ndikufuna kuti uziloza ndi kuyitchula nambalayo. Yambira nambala iyi.</p> <p> (✓) 1 = numbers correctly identified. (✗) 2 = numbers not identified or incorrectly identified.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="395 1200 743 1406"> <tbody> <tr> <td>2</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>97</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>104</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>13</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>234</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>468</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>65</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>6,430</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2	1	2	97	1	2	9	1	2	104	1	2	13	1	2	234	1	2	18	1	2	468	1	2	65	1	2	6,430	1	2		<p> • If child makes 3 consecutive errors • If time reaches 60 sec.</p> <p> • If child does not attempt an item in 5 seconds</p>
2	1	2	97	1	2																											
9	1	2	104	1	2																											
13	1	2	234	1	2																											
18	1	2	468	1	2																											
65	1	2	6,430	1	2																											
 Total number correct:																																

Task 4: Quantity discrimination										Sheet 3 (2 pages)		⌚ ✕																																																			
[repeat for each pair of numbers]																																																															
<p>👤 Ona manambala awiri awa. Kodi yayikulu ndi iti?</p> <p>📝 (✓) 1 = numbers correctly identified. (✕) 2 = numbers not identified or incorrectly identified.</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>4</td><td>2</td><td>4</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>79</td><td>70</td><td>79</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td><td>8</td><td>8</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>32</td><td>36</td><td>36</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14</td><td>17</td><td>17</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>65</td><td>56</td><td>65</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>145</td><td>163</td><td>163</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>40</td><td>96</td><td>96</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>1,400</td><td>1,235</td><td>1,400</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>														4	2	4	1	2	79	70	79	1	2	7	8	8	1	2	32	36	36	1	2	14	17	17	1	2	65	56	65	1	2	19	18	19	1	2	145	163	163	1	2	40	96	96	1	2	1,400	1,235	1,400	1	2
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19	18	19	1	2	145	163	163	1	2																																																						
40	96	96	1	2	1,400	1,235	1,400	1	2																																																						
<p>📝 Total number correct:</p>																																																															
<p>👤 If child makes 3 consecutive errors</p> <p>🕒 If child does not attempt an item in 20 seconds</p>																																																															

Task 5: Pattern completion										Sheet 4 (2 pages)		⌚ ✕																																																													
[repeat for each set of numbers]																																																																									
<p>👤 Ona manambala awa. Ndikufuna undiwuze nambala yoyenera kukhala apa.</p> <p>📝 (✓) 1 = numbers correctly identified. (✕) 2 = numbers either not or incorrectly identified.</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>18</td><td>20</td><td>22</td><td>24</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>245</td><td>250</td><td>255</td><td>260</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td><td>20</td><td>30</td><td>40</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>2</td><td>4</td><td>6</td><td>8</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>300</td><td>400</td><td>500</td><td>600</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>500</td><td>400</td><td>300</td><td>200</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30</td><td>35</td><td>40</td><td>45</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> <td>35</td><td>34</td><td>33</td><td>32</td><td>1</td><td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>														4	5	6	7	1	2	18	20	22	24	1	2	15	16	17	18	1	2	245	250	255	260	1	2	10	20	30	40	1	2	2	4	6	8	1	2	300	400	500	600	1	2	500	400	300	200	1	2	30	35	40	45	1	2	35	34	33	32	1	2
4	5	6	7	1	2	18	20	22	24	1	2																																																														
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300	400	500	600	1	2	500	400	300	200	1	2																																																														
30	35	40	45	1	2	35	34	33	32	1	2																																																														
<p>📝 Total number correct:</p>																																																																									
<p>👤 If child makes 3 consecutive errors.</p> <p>🕒 If child does not attempt an item in 20 seconds</p>																																																																									

Task 6: Word problems		✕	✕
✖ paper, pencils and/or counters allowed if child wants to use them			
Ndili ndi mafunso oti undipezere mayankho. Ukhoza kugwiritsa ntchito mawerengero awa kapena pepala ndi pensulo ngati ukufuna. Ngati sunamvetse undiwuze kuti ndibwereze.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If child makes 3 consecutive errors • If child does not attempt an item in 20 seconds 	
For each problem (✓) 1 = correctly answered. (✕) 2 = not or incorrectly answered.			
Problem 1 Kondwani anali ndi nthochi 4. Atate ake amupatsa nthochi zina 5. Kodi Kondwani ali ndi nthochi zingati zonse pamodzi?			
✓ ✕ Correct answer: 9 <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>			
Problem 2 Ulemu anali ndi masiwiti 6. Wadyapo atatu (3). Kodi watsala ndi masiwiti angati?			
✓ ✕ Correct answer: 3 <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>			
Problem 3 Elton wawonjezera mango 6 mudengu. Tsopano mudengumo muli mango 10. Kodi munali mango angati poyamba?			
✓ ✕ Correct answer: 4 <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>			
Problem 4 Ndili ndi zitumbuwa zitatu (3). Ndifuna zitumbuwa zingati kuti ndikhale ndi zitumbuwa 9?			
✓ ✕ Correct answer: 6 <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>			
Did child use: fingers <input type="text" value="Y"/> <input type="text" value="N"/> , counters <input type="text" value="Y"/> <input type="text" value="N"/> , paper & pencil <input type="text" value="Y"/> <input type="text" value="N"/> ?			
Total number correct:			

Task 7.1: Addition questions (Level 1)		Sheet 5(1)	⌚ ✕
<p>👤 Tsopano tiwona masamu owonkhetsa.</p> <p>✍ For each question (✓) 1 = correctly answered. (✕) 2 = not or incorrectly answered.</p>			<p>👤</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If child makes 3 consecutive errors <p>⌚</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If child does not attempt an item in <u>5</u> seconds
👤 3 + 4 yankho lake n'chiyani?	✓✕ Correct answer: 7	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>	
👤 2 + 7 yankho lake n'chiyani?	✓✕ Correct answer: 9	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>	
👤 3 + 2 yankho lake n'chiyani?	✓✕ Correct answer: 5	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>	
👤 4 + 5 yankho lake n'chiyani?	✓✕ Correct answer: 9	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>	
👤 7 + 3 yankho lake n'chiyani?	✓✕ Correct answer: 10	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>	
✍ Did child use: fingers <input type="text" value="Y"/> <input type="text" value="N"/>			
✍ Total number correct:			

Task 7.2: Addition questions (Level 2)		Sheet 5(2)	⌚ ✕
✍ ✎ paper, pencils and/or counters allowed if child wants to use them			
<p>👤 Mafunso ena ndi awa. Ukhoza kugwiritsa ntchito mawerengero awa kapena pepala ndi pensulo ngati ukufuna.</p> <p>✍ For each question (✓) 1 = correctly answered. (✕) 2 = not or incorrectly answered.</p>			<p>👤</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If child uses counters for first two items • If child makes 3 consecutive errors <p>⌚</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If child does not attempt an item in <u>20</u> seconds
👤 18 + 2 yankho lake n'chiyani?	✓✕ Correct answer: 20	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>	
👤 13 + 12 yankho lake n'chiyani?	✓✕ Correct answer: 25	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>	
👤 50 + 37 yankho lake n'chiyani?	✓✕ Correct answer: 87	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>	
👤 67 + 25 yankho lake n'chiyani?	✓✕ Correct answer: 92	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>	
👤 165 + 37 yankho lake n'chiyani?	✓✕ Correct answer: 202	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="2"/>	
✍ Did child use: fingers <input type="text" value="Y"/> <input type="text" value="N"/> , counters <input type="text" value="Y"/> <input type="text" value="N"/> , paper & pencil <input type="text" value="Y"/> <input type="text" value="N"/>			
✍ Total number correct:			

Task 8.1: Subtraction questions (Level 1)		Sheet 6(1)	⌚ ✖
<p>👤 Tsopano tiwona masamu ochotsera.</p> <p>✍ For each question (✓) 1 = correctly answered. (✖) 2 = not or incorrectly answered.</p>			<p>👤</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If child makes 3 consecutive errors <p>⌚</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If child does not attempt an item in <u>5</u> seconds
👤 5 – 4 yankho lake n’chiyani?	✓✖ Correct answer: 1	<input type="text"/> 1 <input type="text"/> 2	
👤 9 – 5 yankho lake n’chiyani?	✓✖ Correct answer: 4	<input type="text"/> 1 <input type="text"/> 2	
👤 8 – 6 yankho lake n’chiyani?	✓✖ Correct answer: 2	<input type="text"/> 1 <input type="text"/> 2	
👤 7 – 3 yankho lake n’chiyani?	✓✖ Correct answer: 4	<input type="text"/> 1 <input type="text"/> 2	
👤 10 – 4 yankho lake n’chiyani?	✓✖ Correct answer: 6	<input type="text"/> 1 <input type="text"/> 2	
✍ Did child use: fingers <input type="text"/> Y <input type="text"/> N?			
✍ Total number correct:			

Task 8.2: Subtraction questions (Level 2)		Sheet 6(2)	⌚ ✖
✍ ✎ paper, pencils and/or counters allowed if child wants to use them			
<p>👤 Masamu ena ochotsera ndi awa. Ukhoza kugwiritsa ntchito mawerengero awa kapena pepala ndi pensulo ngati ukufuna.</p> <p>✍ For each question (✓) 1 = correctly answered. (✖) 2 = not or incorrectly answered.</p>			<p>👤</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If child uses counters for first two items • If child makes 3 consecutive errors <p>⌚</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If child does not attempt an item in <u>20</u> seconds
👤 18 – 2 yankho lake n’chiyani?	✓✖ Correct answer: 16	<input type="text"/> 1 <input type="text"/> 2	
👤 23 – 7 yankho lake n’chiyani?	✓✖ Correct answer: 16	<input type="text"/> 1 <input type="text"/> 2	
👤 25 – 13 yankho lake n’chiyani?	✓✖ Correct answer: 12	<input type="text"/> 1 <input type="text"/> 2	
👤 43 – 19 yankho lake n’chiyani?	✓✖ Correct answer: 24	<input type="text"/> 1 <input type="text"/> 2	
👤 153 – 71 yankho lake n’chiyani?	✓✖ Correct answer: 82	<input type="text"/> 1 <input type="text"/> 2	
✍ Did child use: fingers <input type="text"/> Y <input type="text"/> N, counters <input type="text"/> Y <input type="text"/> N, paper & pencil <input type="text"/> Y <input type="text"/> N?			
✍ Total number correct:			

Tili pafupi kumaliza. Ndikufuna ndikufunse mafunso ochepa akhuza phunziro lamasamu pasukulu pano.		
1	Kodi masamu mumaphunzira masiku angati pa sabata/mulungu?	1 tsiku..... 1 2 masiku..... 2 3 masiku..... 3 4 masiku..... 4 5 masiku..... 5 Sakudziwa 9
2	Kodi masamu amakuvuta kupena ayi?	Amavuta..... 1 ; Savuta..... 2 Sakudziwa 9
3	Kodi uli ndi bukhu lamasamu ?	Ayi..... 1 ; Inde.....2 Sakudziwa 9
4	Kodi aphunzitsi ako amakupatsa ntchito ya masamu yokalembera kunyumba?	Ayi 1 Inde 2 Sakudziwa 9
5	NGATI WAYANKHA KUTI INDE KUFUNSO LACHINAYI M'MWAMBAMU. Kodi pali munthu amene angakuthandize masamu kunyumba ?	Ayi 1 Inde 2 Sakudziwa 9
6	Kodi pali munthu amene angakuthandize masamu kusukulu ngati uli ndi funso losowa wina kuti akuthandize?	Ayi 1 Inde 2 Sakudziwa 9

Zikomo kwambiri. Pano ukhoza kubwerera kukalasi. Chonde usakauze mnzako wina aliyense zimeni ndimakufunsazi.

